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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





THE LORD IS RIGHT.

MEDITATIONS

ON THE

Twenty-Fifth Psalm in The Psalter of King David.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE LATEST SWEDISH EDITION BY AN AMERICAN MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

 $\begin{array}{c} \textbf{TRANSLATION CAREFULLY REVISED, AND SOME NOTES ADDED,} \\ \textbf{TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTION,} \end{array}$

BY

J. G. PRINCELL.



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INTRODUCTION.

A book which in its native language has created such a stir among its hundreds of thousand readers and others who have only heard of it, that edition after edition has been exhausted during its dozen years of existence, and is yet in lively demand, among a people numbering only about four million souls. — that it has been written about in books, pamphlets and innumerable articles in the secular and religious press, — that it has been talked about in private and in public by all classes of persons at all sorts of gatherings, — a work which (and that means more than anything else) has taught multitudes of souls to know, better than ever before, God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, and has caused them fervently to thank God for it and live holier and happier lives, - such a book ought surely to be welcome among the millions who speak and read the English language when it is made to speak to them, at least tolerably well, in their own language. One would have to search long and far and wide to find a book which in language so plain and in spirit so devotional, sets forth as does this book the Bible truths concerning the real character of God, the nature of the forgiveness of sin. and the varied experiences of a godly life.

In translating from the Swedish a book of this character not a few considerable difficulties have been met with. Though unpretentious as to literary style and devoid of all learned intricacies, a certain uniqueness, a peculiar strength, and a delightful idiomatic vividness of expression are natural to the Author. It has been the aim and endeavor of the translators to reproduce, as far as possible, these traits in English dress.

The differences between the Swedish and English Versions of the Bible have made it almost necessary to append some foot-notes here and there in order to try either to explain the differences or to show cause why this or that rendering is preferred; this has seemed necessary especially at places where the Author has deduced proof from or put emphasis upon an expression in the Swedish which is quite different in the English Versions. Where the dissimilarity has been found to be slight, the change has been put within brackets in the text. For all such bracketed words or sentences the undersigned is responsible; but all within marks of parenthesis in the text is by the Author. In two or three places a note has been made on a doctrinal or exigetical point. If all these various kinds of notes are of no particular value, I hope they will not seriously mar the work in the eyes or opinions of the reader.

Unless otherwise distinctly stated, the Bible quotations are from the English Authorized Version; therefore the spelling and manner of printing words in these quotations conform to the usage in that Version.

Now a few words as to the title. Desiring to be as literal as posible even in the translation of the Swedish title, Herren är from, and to retain a name most nearly like the one by which the book is so extensively known both in the Scandinavian and in the German languages (the German title is "Der Herr ist fromm"), it has been, after all considerations, thought best to adopt the title THE LORD IS RIGHT. The title is chosen from the first sentence of the 8th verse of the psalm under consideration. Both the Authorized and the Revised Versions render this sentence thus: "Good and upright is the LORD." The word "upright" corresponds here to the Swedish word "from," which, like the German "fromm," means literally "pious," and then by implication "kind," "devout," "mild," "tame," etc. Only the words "pious"

and "kind" could have come into consideration. "pious" is inapplicable to God, and "kind" comes nearer meaning the same as the first word, "good," in the verse than as the second, "upright;" and this second word or one like it in meaning is what is wanted in the title in order both to correspond to the Swedish and to give, as far as one word can do so, the key-note of these Meditation. The objection to the use of the word "upright," though it is frequently applied to God in the language of the Old Testament, is this that it would both look and sound somewhat strange and inappropriate when standing so alone by itself and so prominent as in the title of a book. Such is the opinion of many who have been consulted on this point. Of the several words used in the Scriptures to translate the Hebrew word for "upright" — viz. jashar it has seemed best to use the word "right" as the most appropriate; that word is used as a predicate of God in Deut. xxxii. 4, "just and right is he," exactly in the same sence as here in the psalm. (More on this point in my note to the title of the seventh Meditation, pages 80 and 81). That also this word, "right," has a certain double meaning, that is rather to the advantage of the title than otherwise; for in a sence and in a measure these Meditations really do show the Lord God to be right over against all wrong notions about and accusations against him, his truth and his ways with man. As he is right, just what he ought to be, principled, honest, well-disposed, so "let God be true, but every man a liar" (if he contradicts God); as it is written, "That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." (Rom. iii. 4).

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J. G. PRINCELL.

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PSALM XXV.

A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
- 2 0 my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.
- 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
 - 4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.
- 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.
- 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.
- 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, 0 LORD.
- 8 Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.
- 9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.
- 10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
- 11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.
- 12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.
- 13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

- 14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him: and he will shew them his covenant.
- 15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
- 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.
- 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.
- 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.
- 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.
- 20 0 keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.
- 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.
 - 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

FIRST MEDITATION.

"O my God, I trust in thee."

- I. This psalm is one of the most beautiful in the Psalter, and has, therefore, always been dear to the children of God. It speaks so good, so heartily good, about the Lord and his uprightness, or righteousness; and to rest the uneasy heart in his righteousness, — that feels so inexpressibly safe. Our righteousness is only piece-work, wretched and miserable. It can give no rest to the heart. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" and to rest in them is to rest in death. To have peace in thinking oneself good and righteous, to be satisfied with one's own repentance, sorrow for sin, prayer, and sanctification, this is a piety with which innumerable souls are deceiving themselves. They may appear earnest, but they are building their house on the sand, and then it is of no use to decorate the walls of their house with mirrors and golden ornaments. When the floods rush upon it, then all depends on the foundation, and if this gives away, then also all wall decorations are lost. Yes, the fall of that house will be great.
- 2. On the contrary, happy are they who have come short as to their own piety, so that they must cast themselves on the Saviour of the lost. It is indeed not pleasant, or happy, to feel oneself to be a wretched sinner, and to come to naught in all that one undertakes in godliness. To know how we ought to sorrow for sin, and nevertheless

feel our heart hard; to know how we ought to love God. and yet feel how full the heart is of love for the world, of covetousness, pride, and other abominations; to know how we ought to walk in godliness, humility, meekness, love, etc., and also how we ought to put off all defilement of the flesh and spirit, but yet, in the meantime, daily see how we transgress in innumerable ways, yea, how we also may fall into gross sins, and this in spite of the admonitions of the faithful Spirit, -- this does not feel pleasant. But it is in this way that it is good to hear of the goodness and uprightness of the Lord. Not as though God's children would by the hearing of this seek rest in sin. No, this is the way of hypocrites: with the story of grace they would silence their consciences, in order that they may continue in sin. On the contrary, God's children seek, in the story of God's goodness and uprightness, help against their sins. For them grace is important because it is the only means which can cleanse their consciences, and help them out of their misery. This we see from all history of the saints. Of this also this psalm bears witness.

3. David begins by saying: "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul." [The Old Swedish Version, like the German of Luther, has the sentence, as translated into English, thus: "For thee, O LORD, do I long."*] These are words by which he expresses the attitude of his heart to the Lord. Such a longing the ungodly man does not know. He indeed wants to go, or get, to heaven; but he does not long for the Lord. To be happy, this he wants; but to be with the Lord, this is not the happiness he seeks. No, just listen when he talks of happiness: Freedom from suffering and trouble, the meeting with dear departed rel-

^{*} That the expression, 'lift up the soul", has the meaning of 'long for", or, 'desire", is seen in Jer. xxii. 27 and xxiv. 14, where the margin has the same literal term as here 'lift up their soul." See Revised Version. -J. G. P.

atives, etc., — this is what he thinks of as happiness, or salvation. But to see God and the Lamb, to be like Jesus, to be forever with Jesus, free from all sin, to be permitted eternally to praise God and the Lamb, — that is not what draws his heart towards heaven. If there be in him any fear of God, or if he do any works of piety, or of devotion, it all comes from his fear of hell. Were there no hell, he would not at all care about the Lord. Any need of the Lord, any love for or delight in the Lord or his will he knows naught of.

- 4. The children of God, on the contrary, have such a disposition, that they long for the Lord. As also David in another place says: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Ps. Lxiii. 1). And again: "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." (Ps. LXXXiv. 2). And again: "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee" [that is: "I long for thee"]. (Ps. CXLiii. 8). And in Ps. XCi. 14 the Lord says: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him." The same desire, or longing, for the Lord we see also in the words of Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." (Ps. LXXIII. 25, 26). The same mind also Peter expressed when the Lord asked the disciples if they would go away from him, and he answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi. 68).
- 5. Such a desire, or longing, for the Lord comes only from a soul's having learned to know its sins. It can never be counterfeited, or produced by artificial means. In all outward ways a hypocrite can make himself like a Christian, but still he will always remain a stranger to this

desire for the Lord. It is only the need of a Saviour which awakens in the heart a desire for the Lord. Therefore we always see that, as long as sin is not felt, a man may indeed hear the gospel, but it does not affect him. With hearing ears he hears nothing. He may regard it as beautiful, he may admire it, but all the while his heart remains averse to the Lord. On the other hand, as soon as one gets into distress over his sins, quickly his heart begins to cry after the Lord; and if one has found peace in Jesus, then also he has such a desire for the Lord, that he can no longer live without him. He may indeed often feel his heart to be dead and cold, but to say farewell to God that, however, is impossible for him. Therefore, also, his life is never so dreary and heavy as when he does not clearly know how he stands with the Lord. The apostles of Christ, and the other disciples, were, surely, never so burdened as in the days when they thought that their Lord had been taken from them. But what was it that then so burdened them, if it was not this - that their hearts so clung to him, that they thought they could not live unless they might have him?

6. It is indeed very sad that our hearts can be drawn to the Lord only through need. If any one in days of prosperity had not at all cared about another, but had despised him, and had been hostile to him, but afterwards, when need came, turned to him, then he, the latter, would very likely answer: "Nay, since you have despised me in your days of prosperity, so now help yourself in your days of adversity." But such is not the case with the Lord. For him it is delightful that there, after all, is *something* which can drive the lost children home again to him. Yes, for this very reason, also, he himself sends want. When the prodigal son came home his father indeed knew that if the son's money had held out he would have remained away still longer, but nevertheless he was glad that the son came home. Had he come before, it would

indeed have been the more gladsome to the father's heart; but since he did not come before, it was delightful that he came at least **now**. In the history of Israel, also, we see how distress alone, time after time, could turn the hearts of the people to the Lord; but still he was always alike glad to attend to their want and wretchedness. Never did he say: "Since **you** in the day of your prosperity departed from me, so will **I** in the day of your adversity turn away from you." Nay, he was nevertheless their Father. Therefore it was even he who made the evil day, and put it as a closed gate in the way of his erring people, in order that they might turn about to him.

7. But where such a desire, or longing, for the Lord has been called forth by distress, there also it manifests itself in the soul's crying after God, just as David does here and in all his psalms. He who no longer needs to call upon God, he has no desire for him, but is dead, and is not a Christian. The children of God have daily needs. Now it is something bodily, now it is something spiritual, that presses. Therefore, also, there is in their hearts a daily crying unto God, for he is their Father, their Redeemer, and their Refuge. Whither should they go with their needs if not to him? Of this it is said in a Psalm (xLvi. 1): "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Thus David says: "Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry unto thee daily" [or, "all the day long", Revised Version]. (Ps. Lxxxvi. 3). And again: "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." (Ps. Lvii. 1). And again: "Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy." (Ps. Lxi. 3). And Isaiah says: "The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor [afflicted, helpless, lowly] of his people shall trust in it" [or, "take refuge in it", "betake themselves unto it"]. (Is. xiv. 32). And again: "Thou hast been a strength [or, a strong hold] to the poor, a strength [or, a strong hold] to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat." (Is. xxv. 4). So Joel says (chap. iii. 16): "The LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." In short: In joy and sorrow the Lord is their strength, their rock, their fortress, their deliverer, their God, their consolation, their shield, the horn of their salvation, and their high tower [or, defense], even as David says in Psalm xviii.

- 8. Thus the life of the believers remains here upon earth a life of daily looking unto the Lord, and a daily crying unto the Lord. Not indeed as though their mouths were always crying, but in their heart there is an unutterable sighing. As Paul says, that when "we know not what we should pray for as we ought", then "the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. viii. 26). And this cry God most surely hears. For "the Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God", says Paul (Rom. viii. 27). Yes, where no man hears a sound, there God hears a strong cry. As he said to Moses at the Red Sea, "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" while Moses indeed did not say a word, but only went about oppressed in heart and full of need. When a sick child, on account of its weakness, can no longer speak, but only lift up its eyes to its mother, then is this to the mother just as much as a strong and powerful cry. And in this, as in a mirror, you can see what the sighing of the distressed and lowly is before the Lord. And yet a mother's heart is as nothing, compared with the heart of God.
- 9. Therefore David in all his psalms gives us an example how also we ought to turn to the Lord in all our need. For the Lord is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8). And far from his being tired of us, it is, on the contrary, his very highest and most sincere desire, that we every day and hour bear to him all our need and misery. Hence he is called, and he is, "a

helper in need"*, and to such a one we ought to go when we are in need. Therefore, never any evening lie down in your sins or troubles, but before you go to rest do bring them, your troubles and sins, to the Lord, and when you have brought them there, then let them lie there. Think, if any one every night when he went to rest were to lay a great stone upon his breast, or every morning when he went to his work were to place a great stone on his back, - surely it would not be strange if his work went hard and his rest was poor. Why, one would say to him: "Put away from you that stone!" So also here: "Cast your cares, your sins, and all your need upon the Lord - he is your Saviour." Needlessly to go and torment oneself is beyond measure foolish. To have a God who is willing to bear everything, yea, asks to be allowed to bear everything, - think of having such a God, and nevertheless you go about and bear misery and troubles and cares, and thereby destroy all your rest and quiet in the Lord, and all power to walk in his fear and footsteps! Why, that is altogether too bad.

no. If I have a temporal matter which I cannot understand nor manage, but which only oppresses me, and unfits me for everything else that I ought to do, then I am glad if any one who understands the matter and can manage it comes to me and says: "Look here, that matter is really destroying you. I will help you; leave it to me, and trust me." Yes, if I find such a helper, then I become light-hearted, and at once feel a new desire and power to live and attend to my work, or business. And if any one comes and talks with me about the matter, I say with cheerfulness: "That matter is now off from me, and is put into the hands of one who understands it. It at last be-

^{*} The reference is to such passages as Jer. xiv. 8 ("the saviour in time of trouble") and Dan. vi. 27 ("the delivereth and rescueth") where the Swedish means, "a helper in need", or more literally, "a needhelper." = J. G. P.

came too heavy for me to be burdened with it. But he took it off my hands, and now I am doing nothing about it, but trusting him." Yes, thus I would think and speak if in a temporal matter I had found a reliable helper. But who can be more reliable than the Lord? And now he has promised me that I may cast upon him all my cares, both bodily, or temporal, and spiritual, and that I may go to him with everything, from the smallest trifles which concern my daily bread even to the most terrible sins in which the devil perchance has ensnared me or brought me to fall. Yes, he also says that he will rejoice over me to do me good. (See Jer. xxxii. 41). Then how can I act more wisely than simply to put my trust in him, and allow his words to mean just what they say? Of this David here further says:

11. "O my God, I trust in thee" [according to the Swedish: "My God, I am hoping in thee"], (verse 2), that is, I am trusting in thee because thou art my God. This is true faith. Just as children in all things trust their parents and rest themselves in their word without thinking that they will be deceived, so faith here is nothing else than such a childlike and simple trust in the Lord. Children do not carry about with them many cares: they eat, drink, sleep, work, play, are at times obedient, at other times disobedient, - but with any cares they do not concern themselves. Where money is to be gotten for food, clothing, etc., — with such a thing they do not burden their hearts, but leave it all to their parents. If the parents have said that they will take care of them, then the children believe it even so far as to the point that they themselves forbear being anxious, and do not trouble themselves with any cares. If the parents have forgiven them their disobedience, then they no longer go and burden themselves with this sin; but as the parents desire it to be forgotten, so the children do forget it, and in a few moments they are glad again and jump and play as if nothing had happened. For they trust the word of their parents. And if they be asked how they can have such trust in them and their word, they know of no other reason than this, that they are their parents. But if they be asked how much they have to pay for such a right to trust their parents in all things, they do not at all understand such a question. They have never heard of such payment, neither have they themselves ever thought of it. No, they believe and have believed for naught, freely; and the parents never had any objections to their doing so. Both for parents and for children it has been and is the most natural thing in the world that all should be free and for naught.

- 12. Thus also the Lord desires that you in all your need look into his word, and see how he has spoken in the matter, and when you see it, just trust in it right away. For the word cannot disappoint. And the more simply you take it the better it is for you. "Yes", you say, "if I only had faith!" No, no, say not so; but instead, say "Amen." Think, if a poor man received a trustworthy communication that a great inheritance had fallen to him. and he, instead of believing it and rejoicing, let his hands fall and began to sigh, "Oh! if I only had faith!" Why, one would be greatly amazed at such folly, and would say: "What ails you? Do you not see how it is written?" But equally foolish it is when we have a word of God which can never disappoint, then, instead of believing it, to sit down and sigh: "Oh! if I only had faith!" God would rather that you looked to his word and let it hold good and said to him a simple "I thank thee." For that would be the faith which would please him.
- 13. Also, such a right to trust the Lord costs nothing. For it you need not have wrought good works nor have any worthiness nor come with great promises. For your worthiness lies only in this, that the Lord is your God. And when you are most unworthy, then you can

still always appeal to this, that the Lord is your God. He at all events is the one who has created you, he who has also undertaken to redeem you, and is not ashamed to call himself your father, but esteems it an honor for himself that you cling to him as your own God. This fact and relation, that he is your God, is not changed by your being sinful and wretched. Just as indeed the fact that children are disobedient cannot change the relation that their parents are still their parents. "What are we to do?" they would say; "they are still our children; they have sinned and offended, so that, perhaps, none will have compassion on them and help them; but we, we must do it, for we are nevertheless their parents." If the Lord God would not be the God of those who are unworthy, sinful, and wretched, then he would be altogether without children. But with what earnestness he considers himself the father of the lost and fallen children, that you can see by the sacrifice he has made for their salvation when he laid all our sins, "the iniquity of us all", upon his only begotten Son. (See Isaiah Liii. 6).

14. Therefore, when you get into distress in any way, whether the distress be self-caused or not, and you see that you cannot help yourself or get out of it, then trust the Lord, turn to him, and say: "Dear Lord God, this and that has now happened, thus and thus have I sinned, by reason of which I am greatly distressed, and I cannot help or clear myself, therefore I come to thee, for thou art my God and dear Father; have mercy upon me, and forgive me all my sins." But if the devil comes and terrifies you, holding up before you your unworthiness and the wrath of God, which you have well deserved, then do you hold up against this the fact that God delivered up his only begotten Son for your salvation. If he had thought of destroying you because of your sins, he would not have sacrificed that which was dearest to him to help you out of your sins. Yes, if it had been his intention to destroy you and deal with you according to your sins, then would you long ago have been in hell. Hence, that he is still giving you a day of grace, this is a new sermon in which he is saying that he rejoices to do you good, and that it is his delight to have mercy upon you. (*Cf.* Jer. xxxii. 41).

15. It seems indeed altogether unreasonable that I should thus, year out and year in, keep on trusting in that way, when yet I see and know how I daily, in many ways, sin and deserve naught but punishment. It appears to the heart as altogether too light and frivolous thus wholly to trust to grace. But what am I to do? When David had sinned with Bathsheba, — what other course had he then than to bewail his misery before the Lord, and according to the word of the prophet believe in grace for everything? When Peter had denied the Lord, — what other course had he then? It would have been better that he had not sinned; yes, afterwards he likely would have been willing to have given his life, if he could have had that sin undone. But now it was all done, and then — what could he do but bewail before the Lord his need, and believe in the forgiveness of sins? "Yes", you say, "but such things are not often related of the saints mentioned in the word of God, but I -I fall time after time, now in one way, now in another." Well, that is indeed dreadful, and without doubt it would be better if you paid more heed to your life, as Paul says: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal. v. 16). But now it has happened again, if you had watched better, if you had not been so remiss in prayer and in the use of the word of God, then it would not have happened; no: it is altogether your own fault, but now, however, it has happened, now you stand there again guilty, as an offender; yes, perchance through your sin you have brought reproach upon the Lord Jesus. What then will you do? Do you know of any other way than again to take your sin and need to the Lord, and again to believe in his free grace for it all? "No", say you; "but in this way

one might begin to sin while trusting to grace, and then it would be nothing but hypocrisy with all of one's piety. Thus indeed do all hypocrites." Yes, altogether true; but what will you do? If hypocrites destroy themselves by abusing grace — why, it is not on that account right that you should destroy yourself by thrusting away from you the grace of God. Nay, here the great matter is to persevere,—perseveringly and stubbornly to believe, in spite of the devil and all his angels believe in grace and say: "Nevertheless I will remain with thee, O Lord. I cannot leave thee, I have no one else to go to, for thou alone art my God, and thou hast promised 'to have pity on the poor and needy, and to save the souls of the needy'." (Ps. Lxxii. 13).

16. Here surely the devil will hurl a thousand darts, so that you will feel yourself to be quite near to hell. On the other hand, it will often look as if the Lord had altogether forsaken you, as is said in Ps. Lxxxviii: "My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto Sheol. I am counted with them that go down into the pit cast away among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more, and they are cut off from thy hand" (Revised Version, verses 3-5). But do not allow yourself to be misled and bewildered. Even if the disciples of Moses come and say, "See, there you have it! God is not mocked. Such is the wages of those who take the grace of God too lightly!" — then you answer: "Yea, God knows that it is through my own sin that I have brought on my distress. But where shall I now betake myself? It is now done, and who can, who will help me? May I not go to Jesus?" — Yes, yes — we answer — you may go, you are permitted to go to Jesus again — even for the thousandth time; for he is "the same yesterday and to-day and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8). Therefore, again and again, if you sin - Oh! may God keep you from sinning; but if you sin — then may God keep you from going with your sin

to any one else than to Jesus. For he is the Saviour, and to him God desires you to go in the time when you need help. As if he would say: "Behold, I have ordained my only begotten Son for this work; cling to him, for he has my commandment not to cast out any one who comes to him and needs grace." Hence, this is the sum of it all: Do you need any one to trust in, then trust in the Lord. For he is the Saviour.

SECOND MEDITATION. The lowly* shall not be ashamed.

ashamed", that is, "let it not come to this, that I shall be deceived in my confidence in thee." This would happen if God did not do that which David believed that he would do. And he adds: "Let not mine enemies triumph over me" [the Old Swedish Version, as also the German of Luther, renders this sentence as an illative, or causal, adverbial clause to the preceding one, thus: "in order that my enemies

^{*} The use of this word 'lowly' here and elsewhere throughout these meditations requires an explanation. The corresponding Swedish word, occurring (in the Old Swedish Version, which the Author follows) in verses 9, 16, and 18 of the Psalm under consideration, in which verses the English Versions, the Revised as well as the Authorized, have "meek", "afflicted", and 'affliction", is elända - derivatives: elände, eländig, eländighet, - meaning generally the same as the German elend, that is, miserable wretched, poor, afflicted, and the like. No one, however, of these English words is quite equivalent to the Swedish, nor fully suitable to the context of the Author's text. Most commonly the Hebrew adjective ani or anav is translated by a word of such meaning as the ones just mentioned; the New Sw. Ver. uses generally words corresponding to the English word "humble". The English Versions use a great variety of words in the rendering of the Hebrew, as for instance, needy, poor, humble, afflicted, meek, lowly, and the like. The Hebrew verb anah from which the adjective is derived means, literally, to be low, sunk; then figuratively of person, to be bowed down, oppressed, suffering, helpless, wretched; hence also, to grieve, to fast, to afflict or humble oneself; and then

may not rejoice over me"]; as if he would say: "See, dear Father, if thou allowest me to be put to shame in my confidence in thee, this will be a joy to my enemies, so that they will clap their hands and cry, 'where now is thy God?" Thus also Moses remonstrated with the Lord God in the desert, saying that if he destroyed his people this would be a joy to the Egyptians and a matter for their derision, from which would follow that his own name would finally be dishonored. (See Num. xiv. 11—19).

18. In like manner may also we say: "Dear Lord God and Father, thou knowest how the world will rejoice if it can cause us to sin and follow its manner of life; thou knowest how jubilant the devil would be if thou forsake us and leave us in our sins. But thou dost not desire — dost thou? — that our enemies should get such a joy." That is the right way to lay hold of God's own honor, and if the Lord would not help for any other reason, still for the sake of the honor of his own name he would do so. It is a matter of a father's honor to help his child if he can;

with the metaphor carried still further, to be humble, piouslypatient, meek, mild, gentle. The adjective receives all these varied meanings. But keeping in mind the original idea of the verb, to be low, it seems best to use the word lowly as the adjective expressing the greatest comprehensiveness in its metaphorical sense, as well as to the state of mind or feeling about oneself (low or lowly in mind, i. e. humble, meek, patient, etc.), as also to one's social condition or outward circumstances (low or lowly in respect of others, i. e. poor, needy, suffering, oppressed, helpless). The Hebrew word is never used in a morally bad or contemptible sense, as are sometimes the Swedish eländig and the English low, miserable, wretched, and the like. (Cf. Ps. ix. 12, 18; x. 12, 17; Prov. iii. 34; xvi. 19; 2 Sam. xxii. 36, "thy gentleness", or condescension, said of God; Is. Liv. 11, "afflicted", being the word mostly used in the Psalms and the Prophets; Zec. ix. 3, "lowly", about Christ). Where it may seem necessary, in order more clearly to bring out the comprehensive idea of the term, whether in the Author's text or in Bible passages quoted, some of the more or less synonymous English words will be placed in juxtaposition within brackets, as in §7, page 13.-J. G. P.

and if he does not, then the whole world looks at him and considers him a bad father. Such facts are real rocks for our poor prayers to rest on. Even if I am unworthy, and my prayer is poor, yet the fact stands there, that if the Lord does not help me he is preparing my enemies a joy, and is bringing dishonor on his own name. But, surely, this he will not do. If at times it even looks like it, - nevertheless, do not be misled. In the case of Israel in the wilderness it many times seemed as if the Lord had been minded to destroy his people, but he never did. He chastened them, yea, at times he punished them terribly, but still the covenant with Abraham he always maintained. Likewise, when the Lord Jesus was bound and crucified, then all his enemies were jubilant, and it looked altogether certain that God had forsaken him. But their joy was short. So also it will often look very sad for the people of God, really as if the victory belonged to the enemies; but be assured, their triumph will be short. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall I shall arise", says Micah (vii. 8). The Lord bringeth to naught the counsel of the enemies: he maketh their devices of none effect. (Cf. Ps. xxxiii. 10). But to us he says: "Be still, and know that I am God." (Ps. xLvi. 10). "I will plead and maintain your cause: trust me."

19. Therefore it is here further said (verse 3): "Yea, none that wait on thee shall be ashamed."* This is a definite promise of God, repeated in many places, and confirmed by many examples in the Scriptures. Thus says David in another Psalm (xxxiv. 5): "They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed" ["shall never be confounded." Revised Version]. Thus

^{*} Thus properly rendered in the Engl. Revised Version. The Swedish is like it, only it has the word corresponding to "for" instead of the one for "yea". The sentence is by no means a prayer, or a wish, as the Authorized Version has it, but a strong affirmative declaration. — J. G. P.

says Isaiah (xLv. 17): "Israel shall be saved in [or, by] the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Thus says Paul (Rom. ix. 33): "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." It has never happened and can never happen that they who trust in the Lord shall be brought to shame, [that is, disappointed, deluded, deceived, which is the meaning of the Hebraistic expression to be ashamed, put to shame, caused to be ashamed, or, brought to shame]. They may, indeed, have to go through dark valleys where it will seem as though they were forsaken; but ashamed they shall never be made. When Abraham, after receiving the promise, was suffered to go many years and vainly wait; when, after having received the son of promise, he was commanded to sacrifice him; then indeed it looked dark, but he was not put to shame. When Joseph was sold by his brethren, became a slave in the house of Potiphar, was cast into prison, and was made to sit there for years, then indeed it looked dark; but he was not put to shame. When the malefactor, or thief, hung upon the cross ready to die, then surely it looked dark as to his salvation: but he turned to him who was hanging at his side, to the man whom God had ordained to be the Saviour of the world, and he was not put to shame.

20. In short: It is impossible for him who trusts in the Lord to be put to shame. For such a one has a distinct promise of God, and until the promise comes to naught he cannot be put to shame. Though now his faith may be weak, yet the promise of God is strong; and if we look through the history of God's kingdom of grace we shall find persons without number who have feared that they would be caused to be ashamed, but not a single one who really became ashamed. Nay, if only one such had been put to shame, then the devil would be stronger than God, and the hope of all would then be lost eternally. It has indeed looked so wretchedly gloomy for the saints, that Asaph

has been constrained to ask: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender. mercies?" (Ps. Lxxvii. 9), — that also Jeremiah has felt bound to complain: "My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD" (Lam. iii: 18; according to the Old Swedish: "My hope is gone, that I shall ever be with the Lord"). But always has this promise conquered at last: "The needy shall not alway be forgotten, nor the expectation of the poor [the lowly, the afflicted] perish for ever" (Ps. ix. 18, Revised Version). Even if the saints have forgotten the promise of God, and have doubted, yet God has always remembered what he has spoken. When Joshua was about to die, he said to the people: "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." (Josh. xxiii. 14). And after the troubles and doubts and miseries and sorrows of this present time are all over, we shall in heaven very likely say to Joshua: "You were right. We did not always believe it, and for that reason brought on ourselves much needless suffering. Now we see what fools we were. Not one thing has failed or remained unfulfilled. The Lord has kept his word in all things. Yes, his faithfulness has been greater than our faith, otherwise we would not be in heaven now." Where we have a definite promise of God's word, there we can be sure and safe. Though heaven and earth pass away, not a single letter of that word shall be blotted out.

21. Therefore the lowly [the Lord's poor and afflicted ones] ought to take courage and be of good cheer. You need not be great, strong, or powerful in order to overcome in all things, and finally reach in safety the eternal rest of God. For this is the promise: "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you", thus saith the Lord (Is. xLvi. 4). And again: "I will not fail

thee, nor forsake thee"; "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. i. 5; Heb. xiii. 5; Deut. xxxi. 6,8). And again: "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor [lowly, distressed, afflicted] also, and him that hath no helper. He shall have pity on the poor and needy, and the souls of the needy he shall save." (Ps. Lxxii. 12, 13). And again: "No one shall snatch them [my sheep] out of my hand." (Joh. x. 28, Rev. Ver.). And again: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper." (Ps. cxxi. 4, 5). And again: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke xii. 32). — Are you sinful and unclean - what more? It is God's will that you shall have the kingdom. Are you weak, yea, really fainting-what more? When he carries you, you will advance, and reach your destination equally well. To lie upon another and allow oneself to be carried — there is no great strength needed for that. If only he who carries is strong, then there is no trouble for the weak: they are all right. And he is strong — the Lord of hosts, who carries his people upon mighty arms. But his arms are his promises, and they are strong enough to carry home all the poor and lowly ones. Even if their misery were greater than it is, even then the promises would as little totter as a bridge of stone totters by a fly walking over it.

22. Therefore, hold out, you poor and afflicted one, you who are trudging about, wondering how at last it will be with you. There is no danger. The Lord upholds you with the right hand of his righteousness. (See Is. xLi. 10). Your repentance, your prayers, your faith — all, all are wretched, and ought to be better. But one thing is still good, to wit: the faithfulness of God. When you cannot depend on your own faith, then lay yourself on the faithfulness of God. Have you not received his definite word? Has he not laid all your sins on his only begotten Son? And now do you think it is all over with both his word

and his work? No; keep on still a little while. If, however, you let go, he will still hold on to you. "Ye shall be borne upon the side", he says. [Is. Lxvi. 12,—according to the Old Swedish: "in the bosom"; according to the New Swedish: "in the arms"]. And as surely as God is faithful and sincere, so certainly will you too be obliged at last to confess something like this: "In thee, O Lord, this poor man trusted, and has not been made ashamed." Wait only a little while, then you will see. There is earnestness and sincerity in the promises of God. "None", it is said, "none shall be ashamed that wait on the Lord." Nay, the mountains shall indeed depart, and the hills be removed; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; the stars shall fall from the firmament - yea, incredible things shall happen; but of those who wait on the Lord none shall be ashamed - no, not one. For such is the promise, and its security is the faithfulness of God.

23. "But", says our text further, "the wicked despisers shall be made ashamed." [Thus according to the Old Swedish Version].* "The wicked despisers", or, as the expression in the original text really means, "they who are faithless without cause",† they are such as do not at all

^{*} The English Authorized Version has the sentence erroneously in the form of a wish or prayer: "Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause." The Revised Version is right in making the sentence declarative, thus: "They shall be ashamed that deal treacherously without cause." See further in the next note. — J. G. P.

[†] In the Hebrew the word here translated "faithless", in the Auth. Ver. "transgress", in the Revised "deal treacherously", is the one generally used by the sacred writers to express the idea of a wife faithlessly forsaking her husband, or a husband his wife, or one friend the other; then metaphorically of a soul or a people faithlessly forsaking God, who according to a well-known and expressive Biblical metaphor is regarded as a husband. (Cf. Ex. xxi. 8; Jer. iii. 8, 20; v. 11; Hos. v. 7; vi. 7; Mal. ii. 11, 14). Now, this being the underlying figure in the Psalmist's exprestion, it

care about the Lord, nor his covenant of spiritual marriage, to be their God, their Lord, and husband]. Of such the world is full. They care neither about God's law, nor God's grace; they have no sorrow for their sins, neither any joy in the Lord. Nay, on the contrary, they rejoice in their ungodly life as if it were all right and well. These also have a kind of hope, but it will be brought to everlasting shame. They, even they, expect to be saved, but their expectation will fail them. That they are sure and sincere in their hope will not help them. They are building their house on the sand, and it will be of no avail that they are fortifying and making thick and strong the walls: the fall of the house will thereby be all the heavier, and the loss the greater. It is determined in heaven that their hope and joy shall end in destruction and terrors. This they do not expect; for if you tell them so, they mock at such language. But alas, all will come to pass as God has said: — the outer darkness with weeping, and gnashing of teeth, with no change, with no hope! - a worm which does not die, and a fire which is not quenched! Woe! Woe! O poor soul, whither are you going?

24. No human tongue can express, and no human understanding can grasp the terribleness of that which is here called, "shall be ashamed". Think: when two shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, the other left; when two shall lie in one bed, the one shall be taken, the other left; when they who here have been defiant and mighty shall cry to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the rocks and hills, "Cover us, and hide us from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne!"— [see Luke xxiii.

is easy enough to understand the added phrase, "without cause". In the case of a wife forsaking her husband (or vice versa) there might be a cause, a real and sufficient cause, e. g., unchastity, adultery, etc.; but here in the case of a person or a people forsaking God, it is doing so "without cause", it is "transgressing", or "dealing treacherously", or being "faithless", without any reason at all. — J. G. P.

30; Rev. vi. 16] — that will indeed be a terrible day! But it is coming — and it is coming as a thief upon all who dwell on the earth. Just as the deluge came: No one was expecting it, but nevertheless it came. Noah indeed preached about it, but they scoffed at his talk — until the flood came, and then it was all over with them. While they were laughing, it was coming, and their laughter was turned into agony and lamentations. "The wicked despisers", "they who were faithless without cause", were brought to shame. Thus speaks the Lord. O that you would bethink yourself while it is time, you who are going on in sin, without caring for restraint, or hindrance! Perhaps you are thinking that you will repent when you are drawing near to death, for few are they who desire at last to die in their sins, - but alas! how you are letting the devil deceive you! There is hardly any snare with which he has led so many souls to hell as by his whispering to their hearts, "It is indeed right and necessary that you be converted; but yet there is time enough." We'll see if he sometime with this snare will not have you too in hell! You hope for the best, but your hope shall perish forever; and he who has here during the time of grace deceived you, he will not help you then, but will laugh at your ruin. Perhaps you think it is not so dangerous. For as they who catch living creatures are always intent on so arranging things, that the creatures shall not think it is dangerous, so does also the devil. He knows that the better he can thus arrange matters the more will he be apt to capture. Alas, alas! the day of your destruction is drawing nearer and nearer. Yes, perhaps you will soon be in it. Poor soul, where are you going? Behold, the compassionate heart of Jesus is open. It is yet the day of salvation. O that you knew the day of your visitation!

25. However, it is not only these outwardly wicked despisers, the careless and faithless children of this world, who shall be ashamed. Paul knew of a people who had

"zeal for God" and sought "to establish their own righteousness" and thus seemed to be anything but wicked despisers (Rom. x. 2, 3); but still at last they would be ashamed. Our Lord himself knew of such as would prophesy in his name, would in his name cast out demons, and would do other wonders; and yet they should find the door of heaven closed (Matt. vii. 22, 23). He knew of virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom and were so like the true virgins that their falseness did not become manifest until the day when the bridegroom came, — and then it was too late (Matt. xxv.). He knew and pointed out a man in Ephesus, a bishop, of whom he testified, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted," - and still that man was one of those who would be ashamed, if he did not repent (Rev. ii. 1-5). So very serious the matter may be.

26. But what, then, is the reason why even such perish? Nothing else than this, that they have not subjected themselves to the righteousness of God, but have been seeking to establish their own, and thus have been resting on a foundation which has not stood the test. They have not been poor sinners who have realized their need of life through the flesh and blood of Jesus, and of having all their righteousness in the forgiveness of sins; but they have been pious in their own eyes, as the Lord said to the lukewarm church in Laodicea: "Thou sayest, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing'." O that God might betimes open their eyes! There are in the midst of us a people, pious and earnest, but whose peace does not really rest upon the blood of Jesus, but rather upon their own repentance, their own signs, and evidences, and experiences, etc. They may also be so earnest, that the true children of grace may in their eyes appear as "wicked despisers". But with all this they themselves are nothing but "wicked despisers", "faithless ones without cause", captives in a false spirituality, children of the bondwoman, — such as shall be ashamed eternally. O that they might consider! But when they are told of this, they become enraged, and think that we judge arrogantly. May God help them. It is terrible to think of their ruin. When Paul saw such he had "a continual sorrow in his heart", so that he could have wished himself "accursed from Christ" if by such a loss to himself he could have helped them. (See Rom. ix. 2, 3).

27. Finally, there are also many who with the mouth indeed make a good confession and praise the gospel, who also know how freely and boldly to judge of Pharisees and other enemies of grace, but still are themselves strangers to the life of faith in the Son of God. All their evangelicalness is outward, sits on the surface, and is a self-assumed and with self occupied matter. From their words and judgments it would seem as if none were so concerned about the gospel as they, none so sure and sincere as they in judging of what is and what is not the gospel, of who is and who is not a true, living Christian, etc. But at the same time their hearts are altogether unacquainted with any real sorrow for sin and any real peace in Jesus. Their evangelical confession and profession they hold as a shield against the word which demands life in Jesus and a walking in the Spirit. Just as the afore-mentioned persons think that one strikes at them as soon as the word "Pharisees" is uttered in their hearing, so these last-mentioned persons think that one strikes at them as soon as they hear anything said about the work of the Spirit, about life, about sanctification and good works. And while the former, by the language of Scripture concerning good works, at once seek to defend themselves against the judgment of the gospel upon the children of the bondwoman, the latter

use the gospel as a breastwork and shelter against the words of Scripture concerning life and fruit. If one say anything to them about their danger, then it is so far from one's seeing on their part any fear of the Lord or any consciousness of their need of earnestly investigating the matter, that on the contrary they begin to suspect, and express misgivings about, the soundness in gospel truth and the evangelicalness of the one who thus speaks to them. Oh! it is a terrible condition; it is such, that it makes one desire to weep tears of blood, — it does indeed make one feel so. when the devil is seen thus deceiving dearly bought souls and leading them astray, the one hither, the other thither. While the one is resting in his self-wrought repentance, sorrow, prayer, etc., the other on the contrary is resting in his self-invented evangelicalness. But one thing they both have in common, to wit: they always thrust away from themselves such questions as, "Have you also life in Jesus? And are there any signs which afford evidence that you are living a Christ-like life?" Behold, these are "the wicked despisers", "they who are faithless without cause." God grant that among those who praise the gospel no such hypocrites might be found! But they are there also, are usually bold and confident, but God looks into their hearts. Oh! they shall be made ashamed, and perish. But this they do not anticipate. May God open their eyes before it is too late.

THIRD MEDITATION. O Lord, lead me in thy truth.

28. After David had set forth the inexpressible security of the faithful and the terrible doom of the ungodly, or the faithless, he continues and prays thus (in verse 4): "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths." By "ways" and "paths" of the Lord he means God's truth. This we can see as well from the words which immediately follow, "Lead me in thy truth", as also from many other passages. Thus he says in another place: "Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth" (Ps. LXXXVI. 11). Hence, in this prayer there is contained, in the first place, the important teaching, that man cannot find the truth through his own studies and endeavors, but only through the revelation of God, through his showing and teaching the truth. This also the experience of all times makes clear, as when learned and acute theologians and doctors are found walking in the thickest spiritual darkness, yes, in darkness so thick that even truth seems to them to be error, if it, the truth, manifests itself in spirit and life. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. ii. 14). And even if he committed all the Scriptures to memory, still he would not apprehend the truth. There are many of whom it is said that they have grown gray in the service of truth, and yet they have apprehended nothing of the truth.

- 29. In the second place, over against the fact just stated, the very simplest souls are seen to be able to apprehend the truth and to live upon it. And so they do though they lack all that is regarded as learning, or art, or acuteness. Yes, wherever the gospel makes progress, there it is just the unlearned common people who first apprehend and receive it, even as the Lord says: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. xi. 25). True, there is still much ignorance in such, so that wiseacres, the selfimportant, and the pretentious can easily with their questionings ensnare them and bewilder them; but at heart they live upon the truth, — and that is the main thing. In their hearts they have apprehended the truth better than in their heads. Thus it was in the time of Christ on earth. It was not the scribes of this world, the leaders and the teachers of the people, who apprehended the truth. No, they were stoneblind to it, whilst publicans, harlots, fishermen, and simple country people understood and accepted it. Of such it is said in Luke vii. 29: "And all the people that heard him [to wit, John], and the publicans, justified God, but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves." Thus it was also in the time of Luther. While the Universities and theologians condemned him, artisans, laborers, farmers, women, children, and other simple people believed him. Thus it happens also in the present time. The learned muse, and cogitate, and talk, and write, and determine, just as the blind man does about colors. In the meanwhile the Lord is showing the simple-minded his covenant (Ps. xxv. 14); they live upon it, they rejoice in it, they go to heaven by it. And God be praised for that.
- 30. This then is the sum: It depends wholly on the revelation of God on God's showing us if we are to learn to know his ways and truth. This we also confess

in the "little catechism" [by Luther], where we are taught to sav. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him." By the acuteness of his understanding man has been able to search the most hidden things of nature. but the way of life no one has found without revelation. And yet that way is so simple, that when it is revealed one cannot wonder enough that it was not seen before. Reason has never been able to find any other way than this: do good works, and be pious, so that God may be satisfied. This is seen also in all the ways of the world, for however wickedly the world lives, it comforts itself by believing that it has some piety, and some good works, and beneath all a good heart. There is no one who does not think but that he has some "good side" in which he can find comfort.

Do you therefore desire to find the truth, then there is no other course for you to take than that you in your blindness turn to the Lord, as David here does, and beseech him to show you the truth, his ways, his paths. And as quickly as the truth again becomes obscure to your vision, then take the same course over and over again. Never expect that the truth will be equally clear to your eyes at all times. No, if you really live in the truth, then surely the devil will many times bring you into such darkness and such confusion that you will see no opening, and you will feel as if the ground was shaking under your feet. And that not only in questions of little importance, but just in the most essential and important points. If you then come to these and wish to investigate them with your reason, you will feel as if entirely torn to pieces. Therefore, here also is no other course than to commend the matter to God, and say: "My dear Lord God, show me thy ways, and teach me thy paths, and lead me in thy truth. Thou seest how my heart is full of doubt and unrest, and finds no opening through the darkness. I

indeed desire to understand thy truth, but I cannot; the more I labor for that end the deeper becomes the darkness. Lord, have mercy upon me, and enlighten my eyes; otherwise 'I shall become like them that go down into the pit", etc. This is to open the heart to the Lord; and all at once, perhaps unexpectedly, the Lord will in his good time assure your heart again. And then you will even understand the matter more clearly. It is the darkness of the heart which causes the understanding not to apprehend the truth. Therefore, it is only in the degree that the darkness of the heart is scattered, that the understanding sees the truth. For this reason, Paul, also, in speaking of the Jews (2 Cor. iii. 16), says - not thus, "If they exerted their understanding", - no, but thus: - "When they [or, it — that is, the heart] shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away."

32. But David adds (verse 5): "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me." He desires not only to know the truth, but he desires help to be able also to walk in the truth. This is the right disposition for a disciple. Because, just for this reason do the children of God desire to know the truth, that they may live by and walk in the truth. Rightly to believe in the Lord, to love, obey, and serve him this is what their hearts desire. Knowledge cannot satisfy their souls. On the contrary, it is often just their sorrow that they must say: "Indeed I see and understand the matter well enough; but this is my great dread and misery, that it seems as if I had everything merely in the head, while the heart seems hard and dead as a stone." Such a sorrow does not enter into the experience of those to whom Christianity is only a moral lesson, or a task; such are secure, satisfied, and rendered dull in their knowledge, and never understand the weakness and the complaint of God's lowly ones. It is the work of the Spirit alone when a man begins from the heart to desire the truth, so that it is his sorrow that he experiences so little of it in his heart.

- 33. But walking in the truth, this takes place when the heart lives in a daily experience and practice of the truth in all things. Hence, it is walking in the truth when I not only, according to the word of God, or from the experience of others, or from some old experience of my own, know and can speak of sinfulness, and of the misery which comes from sin, and of this or that soul-trouble; but when I myself also am daily living in the experience that I am a poor wretched sinner who daily needs to come to the cross of Christ for cleansing, yea, not only come to, but constantly dwell at, the cross. To know of these experiences in the lives of God's children, or to remember one's own old experience when the need of the blood of Jesus was truly felt on account of one's own sin, - this is something entirely different from continously living in that experience. May God open our eyes, that none of us may be secretly sleeping on — into death. For if the Lord does not continually keep our conscience awake, it will not be long before we are benumbed and rendered senseless. O Lord, let us know the truth about ourselves. Lord Jesus, keep us awake.
- 34. Further, walking in the truth is also this, that you not only know about faith in Jesus, but that you yourself also daily live in fellowship with him, so that you sincerely believe in him, and are assured in your heart that he is your Lord, whom God has raised from the dead and ordained to be your Saviour, in order that you may cling to him, and have righteousness and life in his blood by faith alone, without any your own merits. For thus daily to purify and strengthen the conscience and to keep at peace with God, thus simply to lean upon and rest at the cross of Jesus, this is the true exercise of faith and a real walking in the truth. For on this account the Lord Jesus has become our Saviour, not that we might only know this fact, and then perish, but that we might believe in his name, and then live. And this especially the anxious and

trembling souls ought to consider, such as constanly go about full of fear that it may be an error, or something wrong, if they thus simply rest on Jesus and daily believe that they have in his blood cleansing from all their sins. It is so far from its being an error, that on the contrary it just belongs to the walking in the truth. And as certainly as you desire to walk in the truth, so does God earnestly want you to exercise such a simple faith as this, that you daily and hourly come to the cross with all your sins, and that you against all your fancies and all your feelings allow the fact to be told you, and allow yourself to rest upon that fact, to wit: that Jesus Christ is your Saviour, who on behalf of God has redeemed you and washed you clean from all your sins. For the true faith is nothing else than such a simple trust in God for the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus.

35. This, also, we can see from many of the examples in the Holy Scriptures. When the prodigal son believed in a full and free forgiveness, then he walked in the truth. (Luke xv.). When the sinful woman in the house of Simon heard and believed the words, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke vii.), then she walked in the truth. When the woman who had committed adultery, who according to the law of Moses ought to have been stoned, heard and believed that the Lord Jesus did not condemn her, but forgave her all her misdeeds, then she walked in the truth. (John viii.). When David after his fearful sin with Bathsheba heard and believed the prophet's word, "The Lord hath put away thy sin," then that too was a walking in the truth. (2 Sam. xii.). For, to let grace be worth more than works, to let the blood of Jesus be of more consequence than all sin, to let God's plan of salvation signify more than all one's own unworthiness, to let the word of God be of greater value than the learning of the Pharisees and the schools, — that is to walk in the truth; but to hold out in such a faith daily and hourly until death, that is daily and hourly until

death to walk in the truth. And that you daily walk in the truth and continue therein until the end of your life, that surely pleases God. But to depart from the cross, and on account of your sin remain away from it, as if sin had dominion over grace, that is to deny the gospel and the truth, and it displeases God even though it appears right to you. Therefore, as has been said, if you would walk in the truth, then take all your sin to Jesus, for in every case it is true that his blood cleanses from all sin, from premeditated and unpremeditated sin, from gross and refined sin, from present, past, and future sin. And for the heart to abide in and by what is true, that is to walk in the truth.

36. Again, it is to walk in the truth, when you not only know the will of God about a holy life, but also allow his word in this matter to go to your heart, so that when you hear how God desires you to be humble, chaste, forgiving, gentle, meek, faithful, honest, and the like, you then exercise yourself in these things, so that you do not suffer the flesh to rule, but that you fight against it; but if you have fallen, so then that you may at once rise up again, confess your sins, and begin anew. Behold here a few examples: If your brother has sinned against you, then will the devil forthwith be on hand to stir up wrath in you. Then it belongs to the walking in the truth, that you do not let the devil rule, but, on the contrary, that you be friendly towards your brother, reprove him, and forgive him, and thus wash his feet. Likewise, when you have sinned against your brother, and the devil would hinder you from confessing your sin, then again it belongs to the walking in the truth, that you do not let the enemy rule, but that you humble yourself, even if it be hard for you and cost something, and say: "My dear brother, I have done wrong; forgive me, and let it be forgotten." When you, as a master or mistress, have poor servants, and you are provoked to impatience and spite, then, behold, it is

to walk in the truth if you for the sake of the Lord exercise yourself in patience, and reprove them with gentleness, and endeavor to help them to become better, so that they will see that you really wish them well. Further, if you are a servant and are tempted to be unfaithful, gainsaying, lazy, spiteful, or to sin in any other way, then at once remember that it belongs to the walking in the truth not to give place to the devil, but to overcome him, and so to conduct yourself, that the Lord can look upon you with pleasure. And if it seems to you that your master or mistress is hard and difficult to get along with, then let the fact that you are serving the Lord and not man, and that he will reward you, be of greater consequence to you. In short: whatever position you may be in, it belongs to the walking in the truth, that you act and walk as if you had the Lord personally and in a living manner before you, yes, as if you had to do with him and no one else.

37. Likewise, if you have to do with brethren who are in error and are going wrong either in life or in understanding, in doctrine or in practice, and the devil tempt you to judge harshly and to condemn them, then rather see how you can instruct them, reprove them, comfort them, pray for them, cover up their faults, and explain everything most charitably. And if they will not at once allow themselves to be corrected, or put right, be patient, just as you see how the Lord had patience with his disciples, and as you know how he must daily have patience with you. For if you allow yourself to be provoked to wrath you gain nothing, but if you carry on the matter in love and in a gentle spirit, then perchance you can gain and save your brother, so that he will through all eternity thank you for your efforts. As Paul says: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." (Gal. vi. 1). But if you see that in this matter you have sinned, then honestly confess your sins, and pray God for forgiveness, and for grace

hereafter to walk differently and better. Lo, when you do thus, that also is walking in the truth.

- 38. Finally, it is also a walking in the truth, that you, when death comes, do not become frightened at it, but that you then commend your soul to the Lord Jesus, as Stephen did when he cried: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts vii. 59). Death may indeed many times seem dreadful to you, and the devil will not cease to hold up before you your sins, the judgment, and the wrath of God. But do not you follow the lie, but continue in the truth, and let your heart be assured that the Lord Jesus has conquered even that enemy, so that he cannot harm you, as Paul says: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, [Hades, i. e., hell, death-dominion], where is thy victory?" (I Cor. xv. 55). But if still your heart is despondent, then straighten yourself up again by the word of God, and let nature have its course that you must die and become earth again. The Lord Jesus will raise you up at the last day, and you shall then receive a new, glorified body, pure and free from all sin. For so he has promised, and his promise is the truth itself, and when you therefore in life and in death cling to him and his promise, then that also is to walk in the truth.
- 39. Now David prays that the Lord would lead, or guide, him in the the truth. For such a walking in the truth, as that of which we have spoken, is not possible unless the faithful Lord leads us. In the same moment he would let go his hold on us we would be lost. For there are so many enemies who lie in wait for the children of God, with the purpose of alluring them out of the way, and so many stumblingstones over which they may so easily fall. Against such enemies and difficulties they could not help themselves alone, or by their own power. There are the ungodly who at times persecute them with hatred, lies, calumnies, and the like, at times try to ensnare them through craft and feigned friendship. There are also all kinds of things in this world that may be stumblingblocks,

like goods and money, trade, offices, professions, and such like, with which even a Christian must have to do, and which easily distract or too much occupy the mind, so that the heart is drawn away from the walking in the truth. If we have success in what we undertake, at once the things of this world are apt to become delightful and precious; then the heart can be so bewitched as to make us forget that we are strangers here, yea, we may begin to enjoy the world, begin to be satisfied, covetous, and torpid, or insensible to spiritual things, so that we can neither with fear and trembling use this world, nor with longing and joy look forward to the hope of salvation. If, on the contrary, we experience adversity, then the heart is at once ready to fall into "the sorrow of the world" which, if it be permitted to have its course, "worketh death." (2 Cor. vii. 10). In short: If the Lord did not lead his own by the hand they would never alive get through the snares which this world puts in their way.

40. In addition to all this comes the devil, who fills the heart with all kinds af doubts and contradictions, by which he seeks to make it weak and wavering, in order afterwards to lead it away into carnal security or sheer despair. Thus he did with Judas, whom he ensnared and led step by step into such security, and finally from that step into despair and eternal death. Thus, also, he did with Eve, whose heart he first made wavering through doubts of God's word, whereupon he led her, and through her also Adam, and thus the whole race, into the fall. Therefore, also, it is said of this enemy, that "he walketh about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v. 8), that he goes forth "to deceive the world" and "the nations" (Rev. xii. 9; xx. 8), yea, that he at times "transforms himself even into an angel of light." (2 Cor. xi. 14, cf. Revised Version). For the devil cannot bear the truth, because he is "the father of lies". For this reason he does all he can to annihilate the truth or to hinder men from believing

in the truth. For this reason he also hurls into their hearts his fiery darts. For this reason he, through all kinds of enticements to sin, seeks to bring them to fall. For this reason he raises up all kinds of sects, schisms, parties, errors, false new doctrines, and other such like things, in order that, on the one hand, the ungodly may not see the truth, and, on the other hand, that the church of God may be rent asunder, and unsuspecting souls be confused and led captive into the tricks and notions of men. But if God nevertheless brings his truth into the light, then he roars like a lion, then he too cries out against "new doctrine", "error", "heresy", etc., yea, misleads even many of the children of God, so that they unknowingly fight against the truth. Thus he did when the Lord Jesus and his apostles began to preach the gospel; thus he did when God through Martin Luther brought again into light the doctrine of the justification of sinners through faith, etc. Then he raised a hue and cry, just as if no one were ever more concerned for the truth and pure doctrine than he. This same method he pursues at all times. Behold, therefore, if God did not lead his own by the hand, then the enemy would at once swallow them up.

41. Finally, also our own heart and natural reason lie in the way against the truth; and this circumstance is the severest hindrance to the walking in the truth. For our heart does always err as to the right way. At times, on the one hand, it leads on into carelessness; at times, on the other hand, it drops down into the works of the law. In the eyes of man's depraved nature there is nothing more unreasonable than the simple evangelical truth that the justification of sinners is of grace without the works of the law, and that true godliness arises from man's being freed from the law, yea, from his being dead to the law. Directly contrary to this, the theology of the natural heart reads thus: "If you are to hope for the grace of God you must do good works and be pious, and if you

are to have true piety you must moderate and limit this talk about free grace, and, instead of that, strongly urge the works of the law, and bind the conscience under the law." God alone knows how many there are who once began in the Spirit, but at last through the seductions of their own hearts have suffered shipwreck, and have perished. But if the soul remain steadfast in the freedom of the gospel, then, on the other hand, it will not be long before the temptation comes to regard it as something tiresome and bitter daily to crucify one's flesh together with its affections and lusts. And lo, all at once we may find ourselves caught in a careless and slumbering state of life, where we have altogether forgotten how we ought to walk in imitation of Christ, and with a holy life adorn his precious gospel. Then comes the faithful Spirit of God, and rebukes and awakens the soul; but straightway there will be another voice whispering in the heart, saying: "Now look here, it will not do to go on in this way; no, you must hold yourself to the law, otherwise you will fall into wantonness and indifference." In short: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" [or, "defiant and dejected"],* as the prophet says. (Jer. xvii. 9). Now on the right hand, now on the left hand, it is prone to go out of the way. And if the Lord did not lead his own by the hand they never would remain in the truth.

^{*} The Author (P. W.) gives here the Swedish of the German translation by Luther, which, as often, is here very expressive in the use of strong antithetical words: "Es ist das Herz ein trotziges und verzagtes Ding." The Hebrew does not indeed say just that in exactly corresponding words, but the idea can easily be extracted from the words rendered "deceitful" (meaning also, "bound up", "enclosed", "inaccessible") and "desperately wicked" (literally, "severely sick", hence, dejected, despondent, etc.,—then, as to morals, "profoundly corrupt").—J. G. P.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

"Thou art the God of my salvation."

42. After we have, in the foregoing, been shown how impossible it is for the children of God to keep themselves in the truth, David goes on further to show us the sure ground, which can make the children of God confident that they, in spite of their weakness and the power of their enemies, shall be preserved in the truth. "For", says he to the Lord, "thou art the God who helpest me" [thus according to the Swedish Old Version], or, as the words of the psalmist really run: "Thou art the God of my salvation", that is, the God upon whom my salvation depends, the God from whom my salvation comes. As if he would say: "Lord God, I have no other helper, neither can I help myself; therefore I expect everything from thee, since thou callest thyself my Saviour." This is the true simplicity of faith which in the highest degree pleases the Lord. For if any one has promised help to another, and that other one trusts him because of his word, then this trust pleases him, and it becomes an important matter for him to see to it, that that other one shall not be put to shame in his trust and confidence. In the same way it does certainly well please the Lord, that sinners esteem his word so much that they confide in him, and in right good earnest regard him as their Saviour. The simpler and firmer their confidence is, the better it is and the more good it does. Just as you see children in the simplest way leaning on their parents and expecting from them clothing, food, help, and counsel; so do also you in like manner, and say in your. heart: "Behold, he is my Father, the dear Lord God in heaven, and he surely sees that I cannot help myself, or get along by myself, but must then go astray unless he leads me; besides he has also promised and said that he will guide me with his eyes in the way which I shall go, yea, lead me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake (see Ps. xxxii. 8; xxiii. 3), — and so I can indeed be calm; and so I can with joy eat, drink, and work, sleep quietly, and die in peace, - and verily, what more do I need?" Therefore, you must not read these words of David as though they concerned David only, but so that you may learn how you too ought to consider God, not as an executioner, or tormentor, but as a father who has undertaken to save you altogether freely, without any your payment, and who for this purpose also has sent to you his only begotten Son with authority, power, and commandment to redeem you, by his blood, from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, to carry you upon his shoulders and to bring you into the eternal rest.

43. Well, then, let this now be said to you, so that you may hear it and act accordingly: Whatever need and danger you may get into, wherever you need a Saviour, then at once take right hold of the Lord Jesus. For him God has sent to be a help to you, and has said: "Trust him; he is the man; he will do it." If you are in or get into bodily trouble, then remember that he is the God of your salvation. Do your sins oppress you, then remember that he is the God of your salvation. Have you been slumbering, and are now waking up, and are seeing your dangerous condition, then remember that he is the God of your salvation. Have you fallen into any sin, then remember that he is the God of your salvation. Do you feel your heart to be fickle and hesitating, so that everything is to you in a whirl, then remember that he is the God of your salvation.

Are you a backslider, and do now see how fearful is your position, then remember that he is the God of your salvation. Are you afraid of death, then remember that he is the God of your salvation. In short: Whenever it seems dark, and it sounds in your heart, "What are you now to do?" then answer: "I will go to the God of my salvation."

44. The ancients had the beautiful custom of giving the Lord their God all kinds of titles by which they indicated what they were expecting of him. Thus David calls him his "glory", his "refuge", his "fortress", his "rock", his "consolation", his "portion", his "joy", his "inheritance", his "hope", "the horn of his salvation", his "strength", etc. Thus also Isaiah calls him "the Lord that hath mercy", a "redeemer", "the One mighty to save", etc. Thus also Jeremiah calls him "the saviour in time of trouble", etc. This they did in order to encourage their hearts to a truly simple faith and trust in him. For they knew right well how difficult it was for them to retain in their hearts the true image and picture of him. In this they give also us an example, how we ought to let it be certain in our hearts, that the Lord is naught else than a father who seeks only this, to wit, how he may help and save, how he may "seek that which has been lost, and bring again that which has been driven away" (Ezek. xxxiv. 16), "strengthen that which is weak or sick, preserve, support, and comfort his own in all their afflictions and wretchedness, raise them up when they have fallen", etc., etc.; yes, who is so disposed, that his heart, at the sight of our misery, fairly breaks because of compassion, so that he hardly knows how he shall act, in order that he may do us some real good. As he himself says: "Is Ephraim my dear Son?.... I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him." (Jer. xxxi. 20). And again: "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted [weltering] in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live." (Ezek. xvi. 6). Therefore, also, the Lord likens himself to a hen with chickens, a shepherd, a father, a mother, a bridegroom, etc., in order that wherever you see any one who loves, who cares for, who has compassion on another and does good to him, or her, then you may know that this all is only a weak reflection of the heart which dwells in your — your own God, the God of your salvation.

- 45. I once read a narrative of a young Brahmin in India who had embraced the faith in the Lord Iesus. But overcome by the persecutions of his relatives, he went to the idol-priest, and desired to be received back into the religion of his fathers. The idol-priest answered that he would go and ask his god about the matter. After a while he returned from the inner part of the temple, and said: "My god says that you cannot be received back into his worship unless you first solemnly forsake and abjure the God of the Christians." The distressed young man trembled, but fell, and renounced the God of the Christians. Then the idol-priest went again into the temple, but in a little while returned, and said: "My god says to me, 'you must not take back into my service [as a brahmin, or priest] the young man, for although he indeed has forsaken the God of the Christians, yet the God of the Christians has not forsaken him.' Yes, God be praised! It is not so easy for the God of the Christians to forsake his own.
- 46. Such a picture of God we have not by nature, but on the contrary we represent him to ourselves as one who is not specially interested in us, as one who may, likely, be gracious to us if we are pious and good, but who can also as easily cast us away when we sin. For who indeed is he that, when he has sinned and fallen, thinks so well of God as that his heart is bursting because of compassion, just as a mother's heart is accustomed to do when she hears anything sad about her child? Who now

is he that, when he feels his heart is full of unbelief and uncleanness, thinks that God is occupied with the thought of helping him, just as the Lord Jesus after his resurrection hastened to his disciples to help them out of their unbelief and need? Who indeed is he that, when he awakens out of his sleep of sin and degradation, thinks that there is joy in heaven before God and his angels, yea, that the Father already runs to meet him with open arms and a fervent heart? Who, again, is he that, when the Lord resorts to the use of the rod, believes that back of this rod is a heart which thinks in this way: "My poor child, it pains me that I must strike, but I am determined to save you, if possible; and if I cannot do it in any other way, then I must try this"? No, by nature we do not thus think of God; but thus he would teach us to think when he in his word opens to us his heart and permits us to look into his real nature and disposition.

47. Would we accurately see how true it is that the Lord is the God of our salvation, then we must compare his word with his works. And let us now ask ourselves only about the things the Lord has done for us. Who is it that so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son? It is the God of your salvation. Who was it that in the fullness of time cast all your sins on the only Son, and let him taste death for you, in order that you in his blood might have an open fountain for the cleansing of you from all your sins? It was the God of your salvation. Who was it that in the time of your unbelief for years had patience with you, who despite your ungodliness waited for your repentance, yea, who lay in wait for you in order to catch you and give you life? It was the God of your salvation. Who was it that felt his fatherly heart filled with joy when you in the far-away country determined to go home and confess your sins? Who was it that then ran to meet you, fell on your neck, and kissed you, and did not deal with you according to your sins, but forgave you your wrongdoings, and clothed you in the new robe? It was the God of your salvation. Who is it that ever since has had patience with you, given you clothing, house and home, wife or husband, children, health, and all that you have? Who is it that daily has comforted you in your trouble, chastised you when you needed such treatment, daily has carried you in faithful fatherly arms, protected you in all your ways, so that you still live, and this all in spite of all your unbelief, in spite of all your remissness, in spite of all your sins? It is the God of your salvation. Who is it that has promised to carry you "even to your old age, and even to hoar hairs," [that is, until you become old and gray], yes, even through death and into the new Jerusalem? It is the God of your salvation. And he who in all and everything intends to keep his word — it is the God of your salvation who thus intends to do.

48. Oh! is it not blessed to have such a God? Of this David sings: "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me" [or, "sustaineth me." Rev. Ver.]. (Ps. iii. 5). And again: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety." (Ps. iv. 8). Of this another psalmist sings: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God." (Ps. LXXXIV. 3). Yes, just think how safe and restful it is to lean on the God of our salvation, and to know that in his heart there rule only pure thoughts of peace, only thoughts of salvation, — that is the true rest. To see how his heart yearns, yea, has been broken because of his yearning, for the rescue of the fallen and lost children of man, so that he has not spared the only begotten One, who from eternity was in his bosom, — this gives peace in life and death; and a person can thus begin to be able to look up to the God of his salvation, and to say, "Abba, dear father." Of this Isaiah says: "Doubtless thou art our father, though

Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer, thy name is from everlasting" [the last part of the verse is better rendered in the Rev. Ver.: "thou....art our father; our redeemer from everlasting is thy name"]. (Is. Lxiii. 16). O that God might open our hearts to see a glimpse of his glory!

49. But David adds further: "On thee do I wait all the day" [according to the Swedish: "daily do I wait for thee"]. As if he would say: "Dear Lord, even if thou tarriest, still I cannot turn towards any other quarter, but will any way keep on waiting for thee. For thou art nevertheless the God of my salvation." In these words David shows us that he too, like almost every other saint, had to experience that the Lord at times so conducts himself as if he had "forgotten to be gracious", and would no longer give heed to our distress and our cry. From such experiences come such cries of the saints as these: "O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer incline thine ear unto me." (Ps. xvii. 1, 6). "O LORD, the God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: Let my prayer enter into thy presence; incline thine ear unto my cry: For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto Sheol [the dominion of death, or the death-world]. I am counted with them that go down into the pit; I am as a man that hath no help: cast off among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more; and they are cut off from thy hand." (Ps. Lxxxviii. 1-3, Revised Version). "Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" (Ps. x. 1). "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul [that is, in vain form plans of escape], having sorrow in my heart daily?" (Ps. xiii. 1, 2). Yes, thus also Jeremiah complains: "He (God) hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail [that is, with bitterness and distress].... He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out.... Also when I cry and shout [or, call for help], he shutteth out my prayer. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone; he hath made my paths croocked" [that is, made even the smallest ways of escape impassable, useless], etc. (Lam. iii. 5-9). And Asaph asks: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" (Ps. Lxxvii. 9). And one of the sons of Korah exclaims: "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, 'Where is thy God?' I will say unto God, my rock, 'Why hast thou forgotten me?" (Ps.xLii. 3, 9). Of such lamentations of the saints the Bible is full, and from them you are to learn that it is nothing new which is happening to you if you, also, at times must thus complain. No; this is God's method of dealing with his saints, in order that they may learn how helpless they are without him.

50. But these words of David further teach us how we are to behave when the Lord hides his countenance; namely, that we then must not despair, and give up all as lost, but persevere and wait. As the prophet says: "They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." (Is. XL. 31). And again says David: "Wait upon the LORD: be strong, and let thine heart take courage; yea, wait thou on the LORD." (Ps. xxvii. 14, Revised Version). The Lord has not forgotten his promises. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands", saith he. (Is. XLix. 16). Prescribe to him no place, no way, no time, but leave all such conditions to him, and in the meanwhile let it suffice you, that he graciously thinks of you, and mercifully looks after you, and powerfully upholds you, so that no evil may overwhelm you. But if the devil comes and asks how you can believe that the Lord graciously thinks of you when all looks as if he purposed leaving you to die in your distress, then, nevertheless, do

not fear. For the Lord is still the God of your salvation; this he has said, and thus it will remain. "The word of the Lord endureth forever" (r Pet. i. 25), not a single word can fail. Say therefore to him: "Dear Lord God, my Father, indeed I do not understand how it is now, but I see how thou hast spoken, and how thou for my sake hast sacrificed thine only begotten Son, in order that I may live by and in him. Now I have no other course than to trust in thy word and work, for thou art the God of my salvation, thou and none other. Therefore I will still remain with thee, although it looks as though thou didst wish to get rid of me. Lord, to whom should I go, if I leave thee?"

51. There perhaps the devil will come again and say: "Yes, right enough, if only you had not sinned, and had not been so full of unbelief! But now it is altogether your own fault; you have sinned against and in spite of grace, and sometime there must be an end to God's patience, and his righteous judgment will fall upon you."— But do not you permit yourself to be frightened, but confess your sins and that you are well worthy of the Lord's letting his judgment strike you; but nevertheless do not give way, but hold on to the gospel, and be assured that the Lord is still the God of your salvation. For so he is at all events; and no general, duke, or prince, can be as jealous of his titles as the Lord God is jealous of this title, "the God of your salvation." But even if you are not thus assured, still do not give up altogether, but try to hold on to the fact as well as you can. But even if you cannot hold on to it, still just look towards it. For although God would fain have you to believe, yet all is not desperately hopeless because your faith happens to fail. For the faithfulness of God holds good nevertheless. And if you doubt, still he does not doubt, that he is the God of your salvation; if you do not understand the matter, still he understands it; and when your faith is gone, he must

still see to it that his truth shall endure any way. If a child forgets or doubts its father's promise, yet the father must not forget it or let it fail. Well, is it not wonderful: A thousand times the children of God may think it is all over with them, but nevertheless they cannot so altogether give up, that they do not still reach forth their hands for something, and sigh, "O that he would yet have mercy on me, and subdue my sins!" It is as if they were to grasp a pole which has been covered over with a strong kind of glue. When they become so tired of holding on, that they seem to be unable to keep their hold any longer, then they cannot get loose, for their hands stick fast in the glue. Thus really do their poor hearts sit fast in the God of their salvation. The Lord has bound them to himself forever.

52. In such a way of thinking about the God of our salvation we ought diligently to exercise ourselves, especially in seasons of long continued darkness. fore, when the Lord year after year suffers you to live in bodily affliction,—cling to it then. When persistent temptations plague you, yea, often even knock you over, and you pray and cry, but year after year it seems to you that no help appears, - cling to it then. It is just then that you need it. When it looks as though the Lord had given you "over to a reprobate mind, to do things which are not fitting", just as if you were "sold under sin", cling to it then. And if at times it even grows dark before your eves, - cling to it then nevertheless. But, as we have already said, if you cannot cling and cannot hold on, know then that the Lord is still the God of your salvation. Indeed, "'the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,' saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Is. Liv. 10). The Lord has thus spoken, and it will not repent him. He has not been disappointed in you; he knew all about you,

already on the day when he determined to send his only begotten Son to wash you clean in his blood. You may rely on that. He is the God of your salvation, and a God who "has pity on the poor and needy, and will save the needy and him that hath no helper" (Ps. Lxxii. 12, 13), — such a God is he; and as long as you need such a God, cling to him. What you do not understand, that he understands; and when all is accomplished, you too will understand it.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

"Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies."

53. David continues here to speak with the God of his salvation. And he says (verse 6): "Remember. 0 LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old" [according to the Old Swedish: "Think, Lord, of thy mercy, and of thy goodness which has been since the beginning of the world"]. By the goodness of God, or, as it here really stands, "the grace of God'', is meant, that the Lord desires to do us good without any merit or worthiness of ours at all; and by the mercy of God is meant, that the Lord desires to do good even to the wretched and sinful. For our Swedish word "barmhertig" [like the German "barmherzig"] really means, having a heart in one's barm (that is, breast, or bosom). for such as are in need, whether they have come into such a condition through their own fault or through the fault of others.* And such is the mercy also of our God. That the Lord would do good to the good, this nature itself understands, for it is nothing more than what it can effect, or accomplish. For sinners also love sinners. But that he desires to do good to the wretched and miserable,

^{*} Thus also the English word "merciful" implies a heart or breast full of mercy, that is, pity, compassion, tenderness; from the Latin word miseratio, which later was strengthened into misericordia, tender-heartedness, a hearty feeling of pity and sympathy for the wretched (Latin, miser). -J. G. P.

and that though they themselves have caused their misery through their own sin, this transcends all nature's power of thought. Therefore, by nature no one ever thinks thus of God. But thus says the Lord Jesus: "He (God) is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." (Luke vi. 35). But that he is kind to them, what else is this than that he desires to do them good? Consequently, God desires to do good even to the evil, to the guilty. This sounds unreasonable, but it is nevertheless true, and that is the main thing. It is just what we need. Yes, thus also David says: "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." (Ps. CxLv. 9). And "all" - that means all; that includes great and small, Jews and Gentiles, good and bad, prophets, apostles, Pharisees, scribes, publicans, and harlots. Even if you be the worst man or woman, nevertheless you belong to the "all". Therefore, also, the Lord cries, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." (Is. Lxv. 2). All the day — yes, all the day — without intermission, and that to the ungodly, to those who even hate the light! Yes, he is good to all, and has no pleasure in the death of any sinner, but desires every one to turn and live. (See Ezek. xviii. 23, 32; xxxiii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9). "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth", says he. (Is. xLv. 22). "I will rejoice over them to do them good." (Jer. xxxii. 41).

54. But if we would rightly understand the grace of God, then must we consider how he has *manifested* it. Works are always the things which best explain words. Behold, when our first parents had sinned, how the Lord then came, and sought them out, and reproved them, and spoke to them the first gospel. For he desired for them that which was good. When Cain had murdered his brother, then the Lord came, and sought him out, and reproved him. But when Cain said, "And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me," then

the Lord replied, "Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." (Gen. iv. 14). For the Lord desired also for him that which was good. When David had sinned by adultery and murder, then God sent Nathan to him in order to reprove him, and lead him into a right course, and forgive him his sins. For he desired for him that which was good. When the people of Israel had sinned, God gave them into the hands of their enemies, in order that they might know and feel their sins; but he always brought them back again. For still he desired for them that which was good, and was not minded to destroy them. Yea, thus he himself says by Isaiah: "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and his mourners." (Is. Lvii. 17, 18).

55. But most clearly do we see the grace of God in the giving and delivering up of the only begotten Son. Therefore, also, it is said: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17). In the Old Testament there was indeed grace, just as the light from the sun shows itself in the dawn, even before the rising of the sun; but the sun itself, grace itself, arose upon the world for the first time through Jesus Christ. All the works of God do indeed bear witness to the grace and goodness of God. That "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45), this indeed testifies that he desires that which is good both for the just and the unjust. But like as the light of the stars disappears when the sun rises, so do all other works of God pale in comparison with this: - he has not spared his only begotten Son, but delivered him up for us all. (Rom. viii. 32). There was once an earthly father who had a prodigal, a lost son. The poor son had spent during an absence of his father a great sum of the public

money which the father had charge of, and before he returned home the son had left the country. The father was in despair, and did everything he could, in order to find out whither his son had gone. He desired for him that which was good, for the criminal young man was still his son. Finally, through another person, the father *learned that his son was in a foreign land and was there suffering want. And what did he then do? He had compassion on him and sent him money, in order that he might come home. This was good, this was doing good, and here you see a little tip of the great heart of God. That the son had squandered the money,—that was indeed very grievous; however, the father was ready to sacrifice still more, if he could only get him home again. For he still desired for him that which was good. And what else has God done? When he had poured out upon us all the treasures of his goodness, and we through the fall had wasted all of them, then he sacrificed still more, the most precious he had, his only Son, in order to raise us up and bring us back again. For he still desired for us that which was good.

56. If we go further and look at the way the Lord Jesus acted towards sinners when he walked here upon the earth, then in that we again behold the tender mercies of God. For thus he himself testifies: "He that seeth me seeth the Father." (John xii. 45; xiv. 9). Thus the epistle to the Hebrews testifies: "Jesus is the brightness of his [God's, the Father's] glory, and the express image of his person." (Heb. i. 3). Hence, what we see the **Son** do, that testifies as to how the *Father* is disposed. When an openly sinful woman came and laid herself at his feet in Simon's house, then he absolved her and let her go in peace. (Luke vii.). This was the mind of the Father. When Peter had denied him, then the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, not with eyes full of wrath, but with eyes full of mercy, for such was the mind of the Father. (Luke xxii. 55—61). With such eyes also the Father looked

upon Peter in the same moment. Yes, already before Peter's fall had happened, the Lord had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail. (Luke xxii. 32). And on Easter morning he sent, through angels, a special greeting to Peter. Peter had lied, and then used imprecations and oaths that he told the truth. Still the Lord desired for him that which was good. When a malefactor, in the eleventh hour, turned to Jesus with the prayer, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom", then he obtained with him the same day a glorious entrance into paradise. (Luke xxiii. 39-43). The Lord still desired for him that which was good, even though he was a robber, or malefactor. For such was the mind of the Father. When the Lord was on his way into Jerusalem, and thought of the wretched city's hardening of its heart and its fast approaching destruction, then his heart was broken because of compassion, so that he sat down and wept. (Luke xix. 41-44). O, how much good he desired for the pitiable city! When they had nailed him to the cross, his first words were: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34). Listen: not, "Condemn them," — nay; he desired for them nothing evil, - but, "Forgive them." These are words which show that he still desired for them that which was good. When Saul as a violent persecutor was on a journey for the purpose of destroying the church of God, then the Lord met him, cast him down, raised him up, and gave him grace and apostleship. Now, when you see such things, remember that you are seeing the mind of the Father. O, how like unto his Father was the only begotten Son!

57. Yes, let us come a little closer. How has the Lord acted towards you? There was a time when you were careless and unconcerned about your soul. You did not care about the Lord, but strove only for the things which belong to the world; yes, perhaps you were bitter

against the word of the Lord, and against those who confessed his name; perhaps you were living also in such sins as unchastity, profanity, drunkenness, pride, hatred, or some other abomination. And now, how did the Lord act towards you in the meanwhile? He gave you days of grace, one right after another, called for you through his word, knocked at your heart time and again, was always thrust back, but still always returned, and did not leave you until you opened your heart and allowed him to do you good and to forgive you all your sins. Say, what do you see in this, if not that the Lord is good? And ever afterwards, during the time which has since passed, when he has been patient with you, daily forgiven you your sins, reproved you, raised you up, and comforted you, brought you at one time down to the grave [to Sheol, the deathdominion], and at another time brought you up again (1 Sam. ii. 6), — what else do you see in all this than that the Lord is good?

58. Now, perhaps, you are complaining and saying: "Yes, that is all true; so it has been in time past, but now again I have sinned and have fallen most horribly, and now I am driven from the face of God. It is impossible for me to be saved, for now I have come to this, that I even doubt all the word of God, and often think that God is unmerciful, yea, am one moment provoked at him, and the next I doubt if there be a God. Now it is impossible", etc. My dear, where is that written? Your heart says all this, but where has God said it? While he still has patience with you and is still giving you days of grace, and does still let such words stand as, for instance, this about his Christ, the Messiah, "He shall have pity on the poor and needy, and the souls of the needy he shall save" (Ps. Lxxii. 13, Revised Version), what else does all this attest than that the Lord still desires for you that which is good, still thinks of having compassion upon you and of subduing your iniquities and of casting all your sins into the depths

of the sea? (See Mic. vii. 19). Why, behold, you do him an injustice when you will not believe this. For, to be good and yet not to be believed, that cuts deep into his heart. And from such want of belief you yourself fare ill. For thereby you are tormenting yourself "in sore travail." (Eccles. i. 13). But saved and blessed you shall be, for the Lord, the God of your salvation, wills it and shall do it, because he is still good and desires for you that which is good.

50. Of this goodness and mercy of God David says that "they have been ever of old" [according to the Swedish, "from the beginning of the world"], or, as the words literally read, "For of eternity they are" [that is, they are, or, have been, - in the Hebrew there is no verb at all in this clause, — a part of eternity; they have existed in, belonged to, and come down from, eternity]. These are indeed mighty words; they say as much as this: Such has been the mind or disposition of God throughout all eternity,—namely, to be merciful and gracious. Consequently, it is neither through any work of your own nor through the work of any one else that the mercy and grace of God have come into existence. No; all that you ever in any way may have done or can do - that always comes after the mercy and grace of God. And all that God has in Christ done is a fruit and result of his mercy and grace. Therefore, to work and labor in order to render God merciful and gracious, that is a foolish business. But such is nature's way of thinking, to wit: "God cannot be merciful and gracious unless we by good works merit his being and showing himself such." Hence it happens that the whole world goes along relying on its good works, its good heart, and the like; hence it happens that the slaves under the law can go on for years laboring to work up what they call a right kind of sorrow for sin, a right kind of repentance, and a right faith. For they think that God cannot be gracious to them before they have these quali-

fications. That they can have a God who is and has been merciful and gracious from eternity, why, that is so far from all their thoughts, that they fairly think it must be loose and dangerous doctrine to say or believe anything such. But if God through his gospel succeeds in getting the sinner loose from his own works by directing him to Christ, then the heart so easily settles down in the fancy that at any rate it is through Christ's work that God has become gracious; yea, even living and true children of God can be such strangers to their Father, that they fairly grow giddy, and fancy that they lose all sure ground for the mercy and grace of God if they give up the thought that it is through the death and obedience of Christ that God has become gracious to sinners. That the grace of God is of and from eternity, yea, that it was in consequence of this grace of God that Christ tasted death for all, this they indeed behold written in the word of God. But it does not enter into their hearts. That it nevertheless must be on account of work or merit that God is gracious, this seems so clear to their hearts, that they fear to let the words of God mean just what they say as written. Think: a God who is gracious from out of eternity, - a God who out of eternal grace sends forth his Son, not that the Son may make the Father gracious, but that he may cleanse us from our sin by his blood and lead us home to the Father again - oh, how foreign to our hearts is this picture of God! But so it is written of the mercy and grace of God: "Of eternity they are." Dear friend, hasten to give your Father some hearty, simple thanks for this. He has not deserved that your eye should be evil because he is so good. (See Matt. xx. 15).

60. But as the mercy and grace of God have been of [or, from out of] eternity, so they will endure even to and throughout eternity. For so it is written, "Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxviii. 8); and the word which the psalmist uses also in that place is the

same as the one found here, and properly means "grace". Likewise it is said in Ps. cvi. 1: "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy (more correctly, his grace) endureth for ever." In Ps. cxviii. are repeated five times the words, "His mercy [grace] endureth for ever"; and in Ps. cxxxvi. the same words recur twentyseven times: "His mercy [grace] endureth for ever." God is much concerned that we should know and make use of this. Therefore he speaks of it incessantly. When we, therefore, see any one laboring to make God gracious, then we are to say to him: "Dear brother, you err; the grace of God is not to begin now, but has been of and from eternity." When we see any one who is awakening out of sin, and fears that it is too late for him to be saved, then we are to answer: "The grace of God endureth for ever." When we see a Christian who, in consequence of long continued spiritual drought, or in consequence of some great fall into sin, fears that it is all over with the grace of God, then are we to say: "Dear brother, it is yet far and long to the end of God's grace, for it endureth for ever." And if we ourselves come into the like need and the like doubt, then ought also we to let the same words be said to us. For it pleases God that we be obedient to his gospel. Therefore David says: "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy" [or, "grace"]. (Ps. CXLvii. 11). Listen: He not only barely allows it; no, - he takes pleasure in it, to wit, in this, that sinners put their trust in his grace, and that as long as his grace lasts, that is, forever. Therefore, persevere in trusting: — hold out, hold out; for it pays to hold out.

61. Now, David says: "Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies" [according to the Swedish: "Think of thy mercy"]. As if he said: "Dear Lord, what will become of thy mercy and grace, if thou now dost not help me, but lettest me be put to shame?" Thus the saints often hold up

before the Lord his attributes, his words, and his works, as supports for their prayer. Thus David elsewhere says: "My heart holds before thee thy word."* (Ps. xxvii. 8). In the same way also Jacob reminded the Lord of his promises the night when he trembled to meet Esau. For then he cried and said: "O God of my father Abraham. and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee, [or, "I will do thee good", -Rev. Ver.7: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands [companies]. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good," etc. (Gen. xxxii. 9—12). In the same way we too can now use the promises of God, so that we quite frankly and unaffectedly say: "Dear Lord God and Father, thou hast indeed caused it to be said to us through thy word, that thou art our Father and Deliverer; so do see to it now that thou dost not let thy word fail, but that thou as a father helpest and deliverest us." Yes, still more: We can appeal not only to his word, but also to his works which he by Christ has done. Therefore, also, the Lord tells his disciples to pray to the Father

^{*} Thus according to the Old Swedish Version, which, like the German of Luther, undoubtedly gives the true sense, though it is more of a paraphrase than a translation. Literally, according to the Hebrew, the words run: "To thee says my heart — 'seek ye my face' —: thy face, O Jehovah, will I seek"; that is, "In answer to thy words, 'Seek ye my face', my heart says to thee: Thy face", etc.; or, "To thee, — at thy call, 'Seek ye my face', — my heart says: Thy face, O Jehovah, will I seek." The Engl. Auth. and Rev. Versions give good sense, but in a weak form of expression: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek." — J. G. P.

in his name. But to pray in the name of Jesus is to plead, not what Jesus has done in our stead unto the Father, but what the Father through Jesus has done for us, so that we say: "Dear Father, do indeed graciously remember, or think of, not only what thou hast promised, but also how thou for our sakes hast delivered up thine only Son, and how this thy Son has borne all our sins and has gone down into death for them; behold, what would now become of all this thy work, if thou didst not help us, but didst leave us to perish?"

62. But, then, does God need to be reminded of his words and works? Does he not remember and think of them without being reminded? Answer: God indeed does always remember what he has spoken and done, but to our hearts it often seems as if he had forgotten it all. Therefore, sure enough, it is a little improper that we, instead of praying God for grace for ourselves to remember his promises and works, on the contrary remind him of them, just as if he, and not we, were in danger of forgetting them. But God thus condescends to allow us such liberty of thought and expression on account of our weakness; yea, he is even pleased to have us pray so. For he sees, however, back of it all, that the heart in such a prayer supports itself upon his word and work, or that it is at least endeavoring to be able thus to support itself. And this pleases him well. Yes, it is just in order to exercise us in such confidence, that he at times withdraws himself and appears as if he would not have anything to do with us, yea, even as if he would altogether destroy us, though all the while his heart is burning with desire to help us. As the Lord said to Thomas: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John xx. 29). Therefore, it is to him even a joy when we do not allow ourselves to be frightened by such strangeness of his, but rather, as it were, capture him by his own works and words, - oh, how gladly he then allows himself to be conquered! In this way Moses strove with the Lord when he, the Lord, spoke and acted as if he would destroy the people. Moses then stepped in between, and remonstrated with him, telling him how the Egyptians then would revile his name, and also how the promise which he had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the oath which he had sworn to them, would come to naught. But when Moses had spoken thus, then God yielded. "And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do" [better: "which he said he would do"] "unto his people", says the Scripture. (Ex. xxxii. 7—14). Moses overcame him, — O, wonderful play of the faithful Lord!

63. Therefore, with all diligence see to it, how you may receive this for your instruction, so that you also, when in trouble, when it looks as if the Lord were minded to leave you in your sins and perverseness or state of wrongs and sufferings, — so that you then collect his promises, as many as you know, and his own works, lay them all before him, and say: "Dear Lord God, I cannot leave, but will remain in this fortress, thy promise and thy work of salvation. If thou wilt tear down this fortress, bring thy promise to naught, break down the cross of thine only begotten Son, disregard the blood which on the cross flowed for my sins, suffer thy faithfulness to fail, profane thy covenant, and alter the thing (the word) that has gone out of thy lips — (cf. Ps. LXXXIX. 33, 34),—then all is lost for me. But leave this fort, - that I will not do." The one who can pray thus is a real Israel, a wrestler with God, and a conqueror. (Cf. Gen. xxxii. 24-29). For even the Lord God cannot hold out against such a prayer, but must vield and surrender. But the secret is this: That which causes his heart to yield does not come from without, through the power of your prayer, but from within, through his own mercy and the power of his own faithfulness.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

"Remember not the sins of my youth."

- 64. Here David further continues, and says (verse 7): "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." By saying "sins of my youth", he indicates that he was a young man when he wrote this psalm. And it is something very precious when any one already while young goes with his or her sins to Jesus. This is not to be so understood as if the Lord had anything against receiving also such as have become old and gray in sin. No; God be praised! One sees now indeed that persons of eighty and ninety years of age are received with the same open heart and the same open arms. But just listen. to these old people, and you will hear all of them bewailing the sad fact that they did not already in their youth accept the invitation to the kingdom of God. O you who are yet young, come to Jesus! The longer you serve sin the harder it will be for you to turn about. The devil indeed whispers: "Wait! there is time enough." But so he does in order to deceive you. God says: "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. vi. 2). And he — the Lord your God — he desires for you that which is good.
- 65. But David's saying, "Remember not my sins, nor my transgressions", that is as much as if he had said: "Do not impute, or charge, to me my sins, but let them

and all my transgressions be forgotten and blotted out." This is a bold and great prayer, but he had no other course to take. Had he been aware of any possibility of making amends for his sins, he would very likely have said: "Only have patience with me, and I will indeed pay thee all." (Cf. Matt. xviii. 23—26). Now all such expectation was gone. His iniquity was great (verse II); had it been "a little sin", then perhaps he could have comforted himself in some other way. But now it was a great iniquity, and so he stood there helpless and guilty, and had no other course to take than this: "Lord, forget my sins and transgressions."

66. This contains also for us a beautiful lesson. That the children of God so much lack that peace which they ought to have, this is for the most part owing to two circumstances, to wit: at times, on the one hand, their sins seem to them so insignificant, that they cannot feel really guilty on account of them; at times, on the other hand, they seem so great, that they do not dare at once to believe in the forgiveness of sins. The first of these circumstances has the effect of causing them to go and carry their sins on themselves, and never to come to a full settlement with God, whence again follows that neither do they have a firm and certain peace. The second circumstance has the effect of binding their conscience under the law, so that they become afraid of God, and go about with a secret feeling that they are already condemned, and therefore they cannot truly have any peace. For nature cannot comprehend but that before God there must be a distinction as to sins, so that some must be greater, others, on the contrary, less. That a sin of omission is equally as monstrous as a sin of commission, that a sinful word is equally as wicked as a sinful act, yea, further, that the sinful desire, or lust, is as criminal before God as the completed act. — this appears to nature as altogether unreasonable.

- 67. Now, Christians indeed ought to know better, and they do know better, praise be to God! But it is not as easily done, or as easily practised, as it is learned. Nay, just while they very well see what follies the scribes [theologians] are up to and are committing by their many classifications of sins, they themselves time after time fall into the very same follies. To be at heart embittered against him or her by whom one has been injured, to say bad things about and to backbite such a person, to be a little unfaithful or remiss in one's service, to be impatient and peevish, to be insincere and deceptive towards one's neighbors, to permit a careless word to pass over one's lips, —such things, and a thousand others like them, the stubborn heart finds very hard to acknowledge as wrongs, iniquities, or transgressions. To acknowledge and say about this or that, "It was bad", that is easily done; but to acknowledge it as sin, as a crime, — there the devil steps in and restrains. And hence it follows that even Christians can so often be without peace. To subject oneself under the judgment of God, as that is expressed in the law against all sin, this is indeed disagreeable, but it is necessary if true peace is to subsist. And consider, you who read this, if your unrest is not possibly owing to the fact that you will not let sin be sin, and that you will not openly and clearly acknowledge yourself as guilty, but are attempting to excuse yourself and brush over your sin.
- 68. But as, on the one hand, it is impossible for human nature to condemn as sins and crimes those "little" weaknesses and infirmities which seem so insignificant, so, also, on the other hand, it is equally impossible for it to believe in unmerited grace when it is evident that such a fall into sin has occured as must be acknowledged to be really sinful and criminal. Then the heart thinks: "If only it had not been *that* sin! But now I have fallen so dreadfully. And if it had been only the first or second time that I had fallen, but no; it seems as if I had been

entirely sold under sin", etc. And so one thinks that for small sins it is right enough daily to believe in grace, but not so for real falls, for repeated falls, into grievous sins. Behold, there again one is without peace, and goes burdened and full of despair in the conscience, and so does not dare to look up to God with any confidence. It is as if one were driven away from the face of God. But if, in the meanwhile, the question arises, whether all sins are not really alike before God, so that the judgment of condemnation rests alike upon the "least" sins as well as upon the greatest, and that there is offered in the blood of Christ an equally free justification from the greatest sins as from the "least", — then one knows it all so precisely and can with clear words of God prove that there is no distinction, that the grace of God is free to all, yea, that it is the way and manner of Pharisees to believe in grace because sin is not so great, etc. Oh, how wonderful! One knows it all so well, and still it is as if nothing of it would enter the heart. No, this is how it is: If the poor soul finds itself stained with "little sins", then it has to go without peace because it will not acknowledge itself guilty under the judgment of God against all sin; and if it finds itself sunk down in some "great sin", then it is as though all hope were gone because it feels as if grace and the blood were only for "little sins."

69. Such is the harm done by making distinctions between sin and sin. For though it seems ever so right and natural to reason, it is however only a deception, by which the devil on the one hand deceives the whole world, and on the other hand again and again destroys the peace of the children of God, renders them weak, hesitating, and faint-hearted, yea, at times deceives and destroys them totally. Therefore it is certainly needful, that the children of God be in this respect carefully on their guard. For against this dreadful snare no other help is to be found than this, to wit, that you must not quarrel with the

law, but allow its sentence to be passed upon you on account of all your sins; and, also, that you must not quarrel with the gospel, but allow its grace daily to pass sentence upon all your wrong-doings: — to blot them out. And if this seems strange and queer to you, nevertheless exercise yourself in it, and do not cease crying to the Lord to let you continually have his Spirit, who alone is here the true teacher as the Lord has said of him: "He shall guide you into all the truth." (John xvi. 13, Rev. Ver.). See how David here does: He acknowledges that he is guilty, and thus does not hide his misdeed, but goes with it boldly to the mercy-seat, in order to have it all, and all other his sins and transgressions, blotted out, and that without money and without price, simply according to the word, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Cf. Jer. xxxi. 34; Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; 2 Sam. xii. 13). And this is the golden art of faith, that it does not on account of sin let go its hold on grace, but clings to it the more closely, and steadily abides in the blood of Jesus, where it has cleansing, a daily cleansing, a real cleansing, an overflowing cleansing from all sins, yes, even from the grossest of falls. The simplicity of such a faith is even pleasing to God, wherefore also Paul urged the faithful to continue in the grace of God. (Acts xiii. 43). This, surely, he would not have done if he had not known that it was pleasing to God. In short: When your sins oppress you, go at once right to the mercy-seat with them, and say in a simple manner how it is and what you have done, and know that sooner will the heavens perish than you fail to obtain the forgiveness of your sins. But if the devil makes objections, then know that he lies.

70. But David continues: "According to thy mercy (or, more properly, "thy grace") remember thou me for

^{*} The Revised Version has quite properly, "thy loving-kindness", the Hebrew being the same word in the singular as occurs in verse 6 in the plural. — J. G. P.

thy goodness' sake, O LORD." Hear how he speaks: first, "remember not my sins"; then, "remember me." That is, remember me, but forget my sins. David would by no means hide himself from the Lord. No; such is the mind of the ungodly. They do not want to get rid of their sin, but they want to remain in their sin, and there is a heaven-wide difference between two such dispositions. Therefore, also, they have peace only so long as they can keep from thinking that the eyes of the Lord are watching them. In the very moment when the thought forces itself into their hearts, that the Lord is round about them and sees all their ways, then they tremble. They hate the light, because their deeds are evil. (See John iii. 19, 20). But woe unto them! They shall yet one day come forth into the light. If they will not here come to the mercyseat, where their blood-red sins may become snow-white, then they shall one day come to the judgment, and there it will not help them to cry to the mountains, "Fall upon us", or to the hills, "Hide us." (Luke xxiii. 30; Rev. vi. 16). No; thus says the word: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." (2 Cor. v. 10, Rev. Ver.; Rom. xiv. 10, 12). It says, "all", -believers and unbelievers; no one will be able to hide himself, or keep away. O that they would consider that! Just think: now they can come forward and receive grace; but neglecting this, they are at last to be dragged forward to the judgment! Say, is it right that you are so mercilessly destroying your own soul, while the Lord is spreading out his hands unto you, offering to save you?

71. "Yes", you say, "the Lord is good — is he not? — and, certainly, we are to hope in his goodness." Well, hoping in his goodness, yet despising his outstretched arms; hoping in his goodness, but yet despising the salvation which he offers, — think, what a monstrous delusion by the devil! It is as if some one trusted in the skill of his physician, but despised his counsel and thrust away the

medicine he would give. Of what benefit would indeed the physician's skill be to such a one? And consider what you are doing. While the Lord is going after you in his tender mercy and grace, you are going away, still however trusting to the goodness which you are despising and from whose help you are running away! You are acting precisely like a prisoner under sentence of death, who, while trusting to the favor of the king for pardon, would go to work and hang himself! Do you need to be told where your way will end? Those are solemn words which the Lord Jesus has spoken about the worm that never dies and the fire that is never quenched. (Mark. ix. 43-48). Yes, to despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, — that surely is the way to the place where "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Rom. ii. 4, 5; Matt. xiii. 41, 42, 49, 50]. Woe, woe, — perhaps you may soon be there! But still to-day is the day of salvation, still to-day it is time to turn.

72. "The mind of the flesh is death," says Paul. (Rom. viii. 6, Rev. Ver.). That is to say: In such a mind, in that disposition itself, lies the real death, because this mind, or disposition, is "enmity against God." (Verse 7). This death rules over all men, such as they are by nature. This is the death which entered, or began, on the very day of the fall, according to God's previously announced sentence, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. ii. 17; iii. 19). And he who would see it, let him look at the course and state of the whole world. Amid all differences and conflicts between themselves, the ungodly are nevertheless always alike in one thing: they are spiritually dead. They may indeed know much about the Lord, may also be able even to talk about him, yea, may be learned theologians and preachers; but their hearts are strangers to him, yea, averse to him. They have no pleasure in him, no need of him; on the contrary they feel a need of hiding themselves from him, as he himself

says: "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." (John iii. 19, Rev. Ver.). On the contrary, how entirely different it is with the soul which, however bad matters may otherwise be or seem to be as to that soul's life, feelings, or acts, yet above everything else desires to be remembered by the Lord and in everything to be under his eyes! It is the childlike mind, it is the childlike prayer, which bursts out in ejaculations like these: "Lord, remember me. Father, let thine eyes look after me. But forget my sins." Yes, so far from the children of God desiring to be hidden from or unobserved by the Lord, it is on the contrary often their sorrow that they, perhaps, are not truly open and upright before him. They never feel confident, or safe, if they should happen not to be in all things frank and candid towards him, and if they might not lay all — all their wretchedness plainly before his eyes. And think what a difference this is: A Christian's security depends on his being allowed always to be under the eyes of God; an ungodly person, on the contrary, could never be calm and feel safe, but must always be terrified, if he were to think that the eyes of the Lord were resting upon him. He who can discern aught that pertains to the Spirit of God, let him judge which of these different ways of thinking and feeling is of the mind of the Spirit. Yea, he who searches the heart, he knows.

73. But David says: "According to thy mercy [more correctly: lovingkindness, or, grace] remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." [According to the Swedish: "Think of me according to thy grace for thy goodness' sake, O Lord."] Here he repeats some of what he had said in the preceding verse. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." (Matt. xii. 34). In the matter of making a speech, it may be a fault to repeat the same thing that has been said before. But to pray is something entirely different from making a speech to God.

To pray is to open and pour out the heart as it is; and as long as the heart cries for grace, that cry also passes over the lips again and again. Listen how it sounds when children ask their parents for any thing; listen how they repeat one and the same thing without ceasing until they either receive what they ask for or are positively refused. There it is not a matter of "making" or "holding" or "reading" prayers,—no; begging and bothering and teasing and whining, that is their way of praying. The desire or need of their hearts forces them to do so. And it is the same way with the children of God. Think of the cries for grace God hears every day. Wherever a Christian is found, there is daily heard the cry: grace! grace! For as there is a daily consciousness of sin, it is not possible to live upon anything else than pure and free grace. Therefore, God has hitherto never heard any of his saints cry to him without their having cried for grace. And you who are reading or hearing this, say, do you give God a chance to hear also your voice take part in that cry? — Do not sneak away from this question.

74. But by his adding, "for thy goodness' sake", thereby David declares what ground and support he had for his prayer for grace, namely, the goodness of God. For this attribute of God, his goodness, is the spring, or, to speak more correctly, the ocean, out of which all grace, all forgiveness of sin, and all salvation flow to sinners. All that he has done: — that he has sent his Son; that he has blotted out our sins by the blood of the Son; that he daily, out of unchangeable grace, forgives sins and heals diseases [or, defects], - all, all has its origin in this, that he is good. This David knew, therefore he also appealed to it and pleaded it. Not our sorrow and repentance; not our tears and good intentions; nay, only the goodness of God as revealed in his word and works of salvation, this alone is the ground upon which it will do to rest when grace is concerned. Neither can ever any safer ground be

thought of for our poor faith. To rest on the word of God is good; to rest on the works of God is good; but never can I be so secure in his words and works as when I see how they have their roots in his attributes. For only then can it be really sure that the grace which is given in Christ and proclaimed in the word, is not an accidental grace, but a grace as enduring as that attribute of God of which it is a fruit, or an outflow. But his goodness is as eternal as he is himself. Just therefore David says: "The LORD is good; his mercy [grace] is everlasting." (Ps. c. 5). But if his goodness is everlasting, then indeed it endures yet; "his grace endureth for ever", - we have before seen that so many times repeated —; then it still holds good to be built upon. Yes, glory be to God, such grace is good for poor sinners. For what they need is an immutable grace.

"Yes," you say, "this is all very well; but how can I become a partaker of this grace, so that I may be saved?" Answer: Only by your believing in the Lord Jesus. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," says Paul (Acts xvi. 31), and that is saying it all briefly and well. In Christ dwells the entire fullness of grace and truth. (Cf. John i. 14). Therefore, also, it is the entire work of the gospel to point sinners to him. He is "the Lamb of God" (John i. 29, 36); his is the office and work of blotting out sins, of seeking that which was lost and of bringing again that which was driven away, of saving sinners and of making them happy. . "This is a faithful saying," says the apostle, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15). And as surely as it is impossible for him to fail in his office and work, so surely is it also that every sinner, even the most miserable, who clings to him, must find and enjoy eternal grace and salvation. The very moment you give up all your works and go with all your sins to Jesus, in that same moment all things are settled and cleared up; and as long as you dwell at his

cross, so long do you dwell in grace; but grace is the vestibule of heaven. Yes, here everything is open and free. Behold, God has sent us this man Jesus, full of grace, and "made him to be sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21); and now he says to us: "Put your trust in this man. He is the right one. In him you have everlasting grace, which has dominion over all your sins." Do you need to have it so? then trust in the fact that it is so. Yes, glory be to God. Such things are good for poor sinners. Amen.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

"Good and right" is the LORD."

- 76. The verse which we are about to consider is one of the most beautiful and most comforting verses to be found in all the Scriptures. For it is with words like these that the Lord is accustomed "to save [or, help] the afflicted people." (Ps. xviii. 27). May God give us grace to enable us in a simple and artless manner to see what here really stands written. All edification depends upon his opening our minds to understand the Scriptures. (Luke xxiv. 45). O Lord Jesus, open therefore our eyes, ears and hearts!
 - 77. David does not here continue to pray, but breaks

^{*} Here in the title and in the verse (8th) which is the subject of this Meditation occurs the Hebrew word "jashar", so variously translated in the Versions. The Old Swedish Version, following the German of Luther, has the word "from" (German, "fromm") as corresponding to the Hebrew here and in most passages where it is applied to persons. That Swedish word (like the German) means, literally, pious; then it has derivative significations like devout, kind, mild, meek, tame, etc.: - none of which meanings is here applicable. The word "upright", in the English Versions, is, indeed, in its moral, figurative sense, a good word affording a clear, intelligible, and correct meaning: - that of being a person of integrity, morally right, just what one ought to be, true, honest, well disposed, etc. But as the word "upright" would hardly be appropriate in a title, like 'The Lord is upright', (concerning which see my Introduction in the beginning of this book), I prefer to use the word "RIGHT", which, out of ten

off his prayer in order to ponder on that goodness and grace of God for which he had just a little before entreated in his prayer. And he says: "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." (Verse 8). Thanks, dear Lord God, for such words! Such truths we never knew by nature. Our theology was always this: "If we be good and pious [right, upright], then the Lord will teach us in the way." This we thought to be inherent in the nature of the case. But the word of God does not speak thus; rather, it says as much as this: "Not that you be good and pious [upright], but that he is good and upright, that is the reason why he teaches sinners in the way." Yes, what shall we say about it? So it reads, and for sinners it is even best to be permitted to have it so; or, how does it seem to you? Is it not good to have it read, "Good and upright [right, true, fair, just what he ought to be] is the Lord"? Just think if it here stood, "The man who is good and pious [upright], him will the Lord teach in the way." Well, that would be more acceptable to Pharisees than as it now reads; but the distressed, the afflicted, the lowly ones, - they would have nothing to eat, and then it would not be true that "the meek [the lowly] shall eat

different words used in the Auth. Ver. to translate the Hebrew adjective "jashar", is the one most frequently used (47 times); it means and says just as much as the word "upright", and is, besides, generally more appropriate, barring, of course, such meanings as "having the truth on one's side", "not mistaken or wrong", and all reference to position and locality, etc. Letting "RIGHT" have the varied meaning of the Hebrew "jashar" to wit: morally sound, true, candid, fair, being a person of integrity and probity, just the right kind of one, just what one ought to be, - it is beautifully applicable to God, as in Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. xcii. 15; Is. xxvi. 7. In the following Meditation the Author (P. W.) fully explains and applies this significant expression about God; in some places I have within brackets added some more or less synonymous words, in order more fully or clearly to bring out the meaning, - as I have humbly supposed. -J. G. P.

and be satisfied." (Ps. xxii. 26). But now there is much blessedness to be had in these words of David. As they now read they are to be compared to a green meadow or a cool, clear spring, to which the Good Shepherd leads his sheep when he would refresh their despondent hearts and strengthen their feeble knees or heal the wounds which the wolf has inflicted on them by his bites. Therefore, we may indeed keep such words in our hearts, and diligently use them both as shield and helmet and as spear and sword. And right well will they be needed. For when the devil comes and frightens the conscience, saying, "Look here, if you were pious [upright, what you ought to be], then you could indeed be sure that the Lord would take care of and guide you, too, as he does with others; but now, surely, you see that in you there is no piety [uprightness], but only a hard and wicked heart; therefore, it is a false and self-invented faith by which you are trusting in the Lord Jesus," — behold, when the devil hurls such fiery darts into my conscience, then would I be helplessly lost, and must despair, if I did not have something better to cling to than my own piety [or uprightness, sincerity, honesty, etc.]. And even if I could make it apparent that the grace of God has not altogether been received in vain by me, then even that would not help my conscience, but the devil would the more wound it, show-ing how I not only had broken the law of God, but also how time and time again I had wasted or misused grace, and had hindered it when it would and could have worked in me that which was good, etc. Therefore, I must look around for something else and higher than my piety [uprightness, or sincerity], and begin in another way, namely, to grasp this spear, this truth, "Good and right is the Lord," attack the devil with it, and say: "Whether I am pious or not pious [right or not right], God may judge as to that; here something else and higher than my piety, or my uprightness, or my being what I ought to be, is concerned, — namely, the uprightness of God, his being what he ought to be; and even in the moments when I feel or know myself to be most ungodly, even then I must still hold it as certain that God is good and upright. Therefore, away with you, satan! That I am not what I ought to be, that I knew before; but that God is good and is what he ought to be, that you have not made known, but it is written in God's word, and God's word we are to deem holy, willingly hear it and learn it."

- 78. But still more comforting and instructive does this become when we see how the words read in their original tongue. For according to it, this is what is said: "The LORD is good and righteous" (or, right; or, upright). Why Luther translated the original word for "righteous", "right", or "upright", by his German word fromm, (Swedish, from, [English, pious, etc.]), - as he has done here and in many other passages, - of this we can find the explanation in his sermon on the First Sunday in Advent, in which he says: "The words 'righteous' and 'righteousness' really mean pious and piety. When we in our mothertongue say, 'Such and such is a pious man', then the Scriptures say, 'Such and such is righteous, or upright' [German, rechtschaffen, that is, right, just, honest, upright]... Therefore also Paul says (in Rom. i. 16 and 17) that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. In our mothertongue this means: God's kindness, to wit, his grace and mercy, is preached in the gospel.... Mark with all diligence this little circumstance, that wherever in the Scriptures you find the little word 'righteousness', as applied to God (that is, God's righteourness), then you should know that according to the Scriptural usage of language it denotes the grace and mercy of God poured out over us through Christ." - So far Luther.
- 79. But alas! how strange and foreign to our hearts is this picture of the righteousness of God! As soon as we hear that God is righteous, we are ready to tremble

and, at the mention of that word, to think only of punishment and judgment. That it signifies the same as that God is kind [gentle-hearted, fair, frank, candid, and the like], well, who does ever think of that? Especially when a soul has fallen into any sin, so that it then needs a really kind and right God,—especially then it is that the soul trembles at the righteousness of God; and then there is no talk so strange as this, that the righteousness of God consists in his being just such a good, kind, and right God. Nay, then the soul looks about for help against that righteousness, in order that it may not be destroyed by it; yea. then it takes even the Lord Jesus and his blood as a shield against that righteousness. Thus totally darkened have the heart and mind of man become by the fall. In this darkness, also, and as a part of it, the scribes [theologians] have taken that theology of theirs by which they have made an opposition, or antithesis, between the love of God and the righteousness of God, which opposition, or antithesis, they have afterwards introduced into the Holy Scriptures, asserting that this notion, or doctrine, is the spirit of the Scriptures, as it is nowhere found written in words. such a way they have confused the right understanding of the word of God, yes, they have thereby also drawn many holy, faithful, and pious teachers aside, because this is so altogether agreeable with man's natural thought about God. Yes, so soaked through are they with such false thoughts, that thousands of Christians think that they positively see this notion everywhere in the Scriptures, although they cannot point to a single place where it is written. Yes, there are thousands of such persons, sincere and earnest and well-meaning in their wrong view, - not to speak of how many they are who see that it is not written in the Bible, but still do not dare to give it up! May God open our eyes. For the dear heavenly Father would fain become known to his children; and it must without doubt touch his heart sorrowfully, that we use as

a snield against himself the help which he in his infinite mercy has given us, in order that we might be raised out of sin and death, and as righteous beings might come home to him again.

80. "But," you say, "is not the teaching of the Scriptures this: According to his love, God indeed would have fallen man saved; but on account of his righteousness, or justice,* he could not do as his heart desired. For Righteousness [Justice] had been violated by sin, and could not remit or give up anything of its demand for punishment. Therefore, love found a means and a way, to wit: the delivering up of the only begotten Son, in order that Righteousness [Justice] might in his blood, his life given in death, take out and satisfy all its demands, and we in that way become free from its claims, threats, judgments," etc. To this we answer: It is nowhere thus written in the word of God; but if this is not found in the word of God, then you are to regard it simply as the teaching of men.

^{*} The Swedish word (rättfärdighet) to which the English word "righteousness" in the main corresponds, includes the ideas expressed both by "righteousness" and by "justice". In theological and general religious literature the one Swedish word (and its adjective, rättfärdig, righteous) is used in fully as wide a sense as both "righteousness" and "justice" (with their adjec-Lives, "righteous" and "just"). Therefore, where the Swedish word expresses rather more of the idea of "just," or "justice," than the other word "righteous", or "righteousness", I put the two words in juxtaposition. More on this point is said in the note to \$11, page 15, of my translation of the Author's (P. W.'s) "The Reconciliation", etc. - In this connection it may be well to remark that the Bible makes no clear-drawn distinction between just and righteous, or justice and righteousness. The two words which occur in the Old Testament passages quoted by the Author in this Meditation, are quite synonymous, as is evident both from their being used interchangeably, the one instead of the other, and from the Versions which translate either of them often by the same word as is used for the other. Both the words referred to occur in Deut. xxxii. 4: "Just and right is he" (that is,

Yes, even if you find such a doctrine held by many godly teachers, nevertheless let it go, and do you esteem the word of God more than all authority of man. But if some then accuse you of pride, then know you, for your part, that there is more humility in submitting oneself under the word of God, than there is in being a slave under the teachings of men. The godly teachers never desired that their word should be esteemed as anything at all, over against God's word, if they in any respect should be found to have spoken contrary to the Scriptures. As Luther says: "The holy fathers were men. Who will now guarantee to me that they teach rightly? Who would trust himself to, and die relying upon, such things as can plainly be seen to have been taught by them outside of the Scriptures, and therefore outside of the word of God? Saints here and saints there! No; I cannot trust in them, no, not even in all angels and saints, so far as they do not show

God, the Lord, Jehovah). The Hebrew for "just" is here tsaddig, very frequently translated "just", sometimes "right", most frequently "righteous." With its related verb and noun it is the same way. Its fundamental meaning is, to be firm, established, rigid. The Hebrew for "right" in the passage quoted is jashar (the same as in this Psalm; see the Introduction to this book, and the note on page 80), and it is translated "just", more frequently "upright", most frequently "right". So also as to its related verb and noun. Its fundamental meaning is, to be straight, even, level. - In the New Testament the Greek word dike (the heathen idea of justice, the goddess Justice) is used only four times, always in the sense of judgment or vengeance. (Acts xxv. 15; xxviii 4; 2 Thess. i. 9; Jude 7). But the derivatives - adjective, nouns, and verb - have the divine gospel meanings, right, righteous, just; righteousness, justification; justify, make right, set right, etc. Twice occurs a compounded. thus hardened adjective, endikos, meaning: just, due, deserved. (Rom. iii. 8; Heb. ii. 2). - The justice, righteousness, and uprightness of God mean therefore really the same thing, only viewed as to different aspects and in different relations: As just, righteous, and upright, God is in a right or proper disposition. state, and relation to everybody and everything. — J. G. P.

me the word of God." (Sermon on the Gospel for the Third Sunday after Epiphany).

81. "Be not ye the servants [slaves] of men," says Paul after first giving the reason, "ye are [were] bought with a price." (1 Cor. vii. 23). And may the Lord give us grace to give up everything which men teach otherwise than the word of God teaches. If a man sins against me, and thus becomes guilty in my sight, or (as it also might be said) thus "contracts a debt to me," then I do not consider that righteousness (either obstract justice or my own sense of justice) requires that I should demand a recompense or retribution corresponding to the sin against me. And if I do, then no one — least of all God — praises my righteousness [or justice]. But if I do not require any such satisfaction, but remit the debt, or forgive the offense, freely and without compensation, - yea, if I, in addition to such free remission, sacrifice even the last thing that I possess, in order to help and save the guilty offender, then people may begin to call me righteous, for there are then a right exhibition and a right understanding of righteousness. And just so God manifested his righteousness when he saw us guilty and sinful. Then he did not crave anything for the satisfaction of himself; nay, he gave, he offered up everything, even his only begotten Son, not for himself, but for us, not in order to obtain the payment of his demands, but in order to blot out our sin, to take out of the way and to tear in pieces the handwriting, or bond, that was against us by its ordinances, and to break down that middle wall of partition, to wit, sin, which stood between us and him, and which made it impossible for us to come again into that blessed communion with him which was originally enjoyed by man. To demand, to exact—to exact everything to the last mite,—that is not the righteousness [justice] of our God. Nay; to give, to give up everything, even the only begotten Son, — that is his righteousness [justice]. To demand and to exact, - so righteous and just as to do that, the gods of the heathen can be. But to give up everything, even the only begotten Son, for the deliverance and salvation of the guilty, — so righteous and just is only our dear God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- 82. Do therefore see to it, that you do not make to yourself a wrong picture of the righteousness [justice] of God; but know that the highest righteousness [justice] to be found in God is this, that he loves sinners, pities them, and spares nothing when their salvation is concerned. This you can see also in the only begotten Son, of whom the prophet sings, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation." (Zech. ix. 9). Know also that in the Father there is no other righteousness [justice] than like that you see in the Son, as the Lord, the Son himself, says: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John xii. 45; xiv. 9). But in the Son you see such a righteousness [justice] as goes about, and does good, and heals (or, helps) all, seeks the lost and brings home again the straying ones, preaches glad tidings and forgives sins, and finally causes him to lay down his life for the sinner. When therefore some would teach you to set love and righteousness [justice] against each other, then know that that is the teaching of man. For, as we said, to love enemies, — that is the highest righteousness and justice to be found in heaven and upon earth. Yes, how entirely one righteousnes [justice] and love are, that is to be seen from this fact, that the law, which is an expression of the righteousness and justice of God, and therefore requires of man such righteousness and justice as God's own, - the law requires just this, "Thou shalt love, love enemies, love them as thou lovest thyself."
- 83. God grant that we might become able rightly to understand this matter! For it has caused and always causes incalculable damage, that the scribes [theologians] through their shifts and devices have so artfully caricatured

the true picture of the righteousness and justice of God, that they have also drawn many godly men and teachers after themselves to teach according to their rule and not according to the word of God. Yes, even to this has a great deal of the teaching concerning the righteousness and justice of God come, that if an earthly father were seen exercising such righteousness and justice as are ascribed to God, then all would condemn him as an unnatural father, and no one would praise him for righteousness and justice. And so unacquainted with the true picture of the righteousness and justice of God are also the children of God, that they are appalled, as at some new and extraordinary error, or heresy, when some one begins to tell them that the righteousness [justice] of God is just like the righteousness [justice] which he in the law requires of us, namely such, that he loves his enemies, blesses them that curse him, does good to them that hate and persecute him, is kind toward the unthankful and evil, etc. But, as we have often said, however shocking it may seem to you and others to do so, nevertheless do you let all doctrinal devices of men go, and "awake up righteously" to see in the plainest and most unprejudiced way what the word of God teaches concerning righteousness and justice. And when you hear men speak of satisfying the righteousness [or justice] of God, then know that the satisfying, or the satisfaction, of a righteous father, and, above all, of our heavenly Father, is - not this, that he may and can exact to the uttermost a recompense, or retribution, for the offenses of the poor lost children; no, but this - that, by the sacrifice of anything or everything he has, he may make it possible to blot out their sin [that is, not only to forgive sin, but to remove it or clean it out of their hearts and entire being], and thus to get them home again righteous, home to his mansions, home to his broken ("troubled") fatherly heart.*

^{*} The use of the word "broken" about the heart of God,

84. By this you can also understand rightly to judge of the objection which is often made when the infinite love of God is held up before sinners; some then object by saying: "But the love of God is a holy and righteous love." There the attribute righteousness is used as a wall with which love is surrounded, and poor sinners are thus kept back from believing in a plain and simple-hearted way, and thus from being saved. But do you take hold of the matter in an artless and straightforward manner, as we have already said, and know that love shows itself to be righteous, not in this, that it exacts and repels, but in this, that it remits all, yea, gives up itself and all it possesses for the rescue and saving of those who have sinned. When the father of the prodigal son did not remain at home, but ran to meet him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him, — then his love showed itself to be righteous. Yes, do you wish rightly to see how love manifests itself as righteous, then consider how the Lord Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives and wept over Jerusalem; or, how he on the cross prayed for his executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34). Verily, there you see righteousness in its highest splendor; therefore, when you hear that the love of God is a righteous love, then lay that to heart, so that thereby you comfort yourself and other sinners, knowing that its true meaning is, that the love of God is such a love as is ready

here and in some other places in these Meditations, has its primary reason in the Old Swedish translation of Jer. xxxi. 20, where the expression occurs (as literally rendered into English): "Therefore my heart breaks (within) me for his sake." Thus also the German of Luther: "Darum bricht mir mein Herz gegen ihn." The English Versions, both the Authorized and the Revised, are more correct in their rendering: "My bowels are troubled," etc. The New Swedish Proof-Translation has it rather best: "My heart is [or, inmost parts are] stirred up," etc. A passage that really speaks of the heart of God as "broken" is Ezek. vi. 6, and also, perhaps, Jer. xxiii. 9. — J. G. P.

to sacrifice everything for the salvation of sinners, and has an open house, open arms, and an open heart for all sinners who will come, yea, also goes and seeks and cries after those who are froward and hostile, in order that they too may repent and return and live. To do such things for sinners, — that is righteousness.

85. In order that we may the better understand this, we will relate an occurrence. There was a woman who believed in Jesus, and was righteous in his blood. In the city where she dwelt, there was a man who did her all manner of injury, defrauded her of her money, etc. That man took sick, and at the same time got to be without both home and food for himself and his family. The woman of whom we are speaking learned of this, and at once her thoughts ran thus: "As I am righteous, I must procure home and food for this poor man, even though he is my enemy." Behold righteousness there! She did not think this way: "As I am righteous, I must exact of my enemy what he owes me." No; but thus she thought: "As I am righteous, I must help my enemy." Yes, this was assuredly a glimpse of the righteousness of God. But still another narrative. There was a Jew who had been wounded by robbers, and then had been left half dead in his blood. A priest came, a Levite came, and they passed by him. Thus their righteousness looked, and thus it showed itself! Then came a Samaritan, one of that people which was the object of the Jews' bitterness, hatred, and deepest contempt. What then did he do? He went to his enemy, refreshed him, brought him to an inn, took care of him, and payed for his stay and care while there. (Luke x. 30-35). And such is that which John calls "doing righteousness," as he says: "If ye know that he [the Lord Jesus] is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." (1 John ii. 29).

86. "Yes," you say, "that we know quite well; but it is not customary to call such conduct righteousness."

Answer: Yes, we all know indeed that the heart is so darkened, that it has altogether different, yea, opposite thoughts of divine righteousness. Just for this reason, also, we use in this matter so many words. Would to God that the consideration of the matter might bear some fruit, so that we might come to a right understanding of it, and might begin to talk with new tongues about it! Consequently: Just as you now never say to any one, "Of such and such a man one must be afraid, for he is a righteous [just, right kind of a] man," but on the contrary you say, "On such and such a man one can depend; for he is a righteous man; with such and such a merchant one can safely trade, for he is a righteous merchant", etc., — in short, just as you gain honor and confidence for a man by commending him as being a righteous man, so also do learn to use, in like manner, the title "Righteous" when the Lord God is concerned, so that you do not by that title make sinners afraid of him, but so that, for the comfort of yourself and others, you can say: "Behold God,-him we can trust, in him we can confide, for he is a righteous God [a right and just God, the right kind of a God]; from him we can expect a sure and real salvation; from him we can expect that he will care for sinners and reach them a helping hand, as he is a righteous God."

87. In r Sam. xxiv. it is narrated that Saul persecuted David, so that David had to hide himself in a cave. Shortly afterwards Saul came into the same cave, not knowing that David was there, and laid himself down to sleep. Then the companions of David would have had him to kill Saul, as they said: "Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, 'Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.'" But David said: "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing." Then the narrative goes on to say: "So David stayed [checked] his men with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul." But he "cut

off the skirt [a piece] of Saul's robe privily." When Saul had awakened, and gone out of the cave, also David went out; and when he was at a distance he cried to Saul, showed him the skirt [the piece from the robe], and said: "Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how the LORD had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye [that is, I myself] spared thee," etc. When Saul heard this he lifted up his voice, and wept, and said to David: "Thou art more righteous [or, just] than I: for thou hast rendered unto me good, whereas I have rendered unto thee evil' (verse 17, Rev. Ver.). There you see what the Bible means by righteousness, or justice. Yes, God be praised: to render good unto one's enemy, this it calls righteousness, or justice; and thus too it teaches that God has in the same way shown his righteousness [justice]. Keep this; for it will do you infinite good to know that it is the righteousness and justice of God to do good to his enemies. For such a righteousness, or justice, is not terrible, but comforting: so that it draws the heart to the Lord, and helps me to look upon God as when a child looks into its father's face, and creeps into his bosom, and says: "Dear, dear father."

88. That also the holy men of God who are mentioned in the Scriptures have, by the righteousness and justice of God, understood such divine uprightness and well-disposed nature, — that we can everywhere gather from their words. For they always appeal to the righteousness of God as something comforting, as something which filled their hearts with confidence in God. Thus says Ezra (ix. 15): "O LORD God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day." At the word "righteous" here Büchner in his good old Concordance [German and Swedish] adds the remark, "good and gracious." And thus says David: "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful." (Ps. cxvi. 5). And again: "I will praise the LORD ac-

cording to his righteousness" [Swedish: "for the sake of his righteousness"]. (Ps. vii. 17). And again: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness." (Ps. Li. 14). And again: "The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." (Ps. ciii. 17). And even as regards the disobedient it is said in Is. XLii. 21: "Still the Lord desires for them that which is good for his righteousness' sake" [thus according to the Old Swed. and Luther's Ger. Versions*]. In Ps. xxxi. 1 David prays: "Deliver me in thy righteousness." At this verse Luther makes this remark: "In, or by, thy righteousness, that is, in, or by, thy grace, which makes me pious and righteous." After which remark he adds some words to the effect that in the same way we ought to interpret all similar passages. (See his sermon on First Sunday in Advent, §35). And again says David: "Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness." (Ps. xxxv. 24). And again: "Quicken me in [or, by] thy righteousness." (Ps. cxix. 40). And again: "For thy righteousness' sake [literally, "in (or, by) thy righteousness"] bring my soul out of trouble." (Ps. CXLiii. 11). In Ps. LXXXIX. 15 and 16 it is said: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name they shall rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousnes shall they be exalted." Hear that: "In for,

^{*} The English Auth. Version has it: "The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake." This is evidently to be taken in connection with the preceding verses about the "Servant of Jehovah" (that is, the people of Israel, and, in the highest sense, the Messiah), so that it is with that "Servant" the Lord is pleased for his (the Lord's own) righteousness' sake. The Rev. Ver., on the contrary, is here greatly at variance both with the Auth. Ver. and (as it seems) with the Original Text. In either case, however, "righteousness" is mentioned as something gracious, beneficent, and comforting. — J. G. P.

by] thy righteousness they shall be exalted." But what the psalmist means by this, he indicates at once thus: "In [or, by] thy favour our horn shall be exalted." (Verse 17). There David identifies the favor (that is, good pleasure, or grace) and the righteousness of God, - he makes them to be one and the same thing. Verily: with such a conception of the righteousness of God it was not strange that the saints of old found so rich a consolation in it. Yes, in Dan. ix. 16 Daniel prays: "O Lord, according to all thy righteousness [in the Original, "righteousnesses", that is, being and doing right in all things, - good works] let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Ierusalem, thy holy mountain." Just think: when he desired a refuge from the anger and the fury of God [that is, God's dire judgments], then he took refuge in the righteousness of God. O, what a precious view of the righteousness of God the prophet must have had! In the midst of his confessing the iniquities of himself and his people he appeals to the righteousness of God for help, and expects help from it. Think how wonderful! But why is this so wonderful? It has, surely, always thus stood written in the word of God. May God open our eyes.

89. In the same way you are to understand also I John ii. 1: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That is: If any one sin, — from doing so may God graciously keep us! — but if any one sin, we do not however need to give up all as lost, for we have an Advocate in whom sinners can trust, an Advocate who is righteous, so that he undertakes the case of sinners and helps them, as also concerning his coming in the flesh it is said, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just [or, righteous, — as the word is generally translated], and having salvation" [according to the Swedish: "He is righteous, and a helper"* (Zech. ix. 9)];

^{*} Thus according to the Old Swedish Version and the German by Luther, The English Auth. (as also the Revised) Ver.

that is, he is righteous so that he helps, or saves, sinners. And this Advocate we have now "with the Father": that is. this Advocate, who is appointed to help those who sin, he is now exalted to the right hand of the Father in heaven, from which place and position he still carries on his righteous work of saving sinners, inasmuch as he daily and kindly in his blood justifies and cleanses them from all their sins. Likewise it is said also in 1 John i. 9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just ["righteous", in Rev. Ver.] to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The meaning is: "Then, as God is faithful and right [upright, true, kind], he will forgive sins." For as God desires to find in us such a righteousness, or piety, as that we forgive sins, so also he himself manifests such a righteousness, or good and right disposition, as that he forgives the sins of all those who acknowledge and confess them. And this indeed he does daily and kindly through Jesus Christ; for he, Jesus Christ, is the mercy-seat in whom God declares, or shows, his righteousness in this, that he forgives sins, and justifies all who believe in Jesus, as Paul says in Rom. iii. (verses 25 and 26). But what the scribes [theologians] pretend to know and do say that God through the blood of Christ has received a full payment, or satisfaction, for all our sins, so that really his own righteousness, or justice, demands that he now forgive us our sins, — that is nowhere written. The saints mentioned in the Scriptures never appealed to or even referred to anything such. Neither have they in their books or letters anywhere taught

expresses in the main the same thought; but the Rev. Ver. gives in the margin the only correct rendering, "saved", of the Hebrew passive nosha: "Righteous and saved is he", that is, the King (Messiah) is saved through and out of all conflicts, because he is righteous. Of course then follows that, being himself thus saved, he is able and willing to save others, — he is saved, in order that he may save, and in both cases it is so because he is righteous. — J. G. P_{\P}

others to lean on anything such. No; they knew of a higher and better righteousness of God than any such; not a righteousness which gave a receipt for a debt that had been doubly paid, — for this much even an unrighteous man can do, — but a righteousness which remitted and forgave all, yea, delivered up and sacrificed the only begotten Son, in order to restore the guilty, straying, and lost children, and thus to bring them home again all right.

90. But you say: "What then is the meaning of the Scriptures' speaking so much concerning the wrath of God and the punishments inflicted by him?" Answer: That means just as it is written, to wit: that God is displeased and angry with sin, and that finally, when the time comes, he will suffer his judgments to come as punishments upon those who live and walk in sin. The infliction of such penal judgments is shown alike both in the Old and the New Testament; yes, such has happened in the most terrible manner in New Testament times, as, for instance, in the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place thirty and some years after the death of Christ. Learn, therefore, to make a distinction here, so that you know that God hates sin, but loves the sinner, and that too in such a manner that even in and by the punishments which he sends he has in view, not the destruction of the sinner, but his deliverance from sin, as he himself says: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). All of the Holy Scriptures make such a distinction between sin and the sinner, as that they everywhere show how God's plan of salvation tends toward this: - not to destroy the sinner, but to destroy his sin, and not to save sin, but to save the sinner. Hence, wherever you see it written that God loves sinners, then know that this love concerns the persons, but not their sin; for their sin God hates. And thus, also, when you read that God hates, or is angry with, sinners, then know that this hatred, or anger, concerns

their sin, but not their persons; for their persons he loves. Of all of this you can, also, see a picture in a godly earthly father; for the more godly and righteous he is, the more he hates the sin of his children, but loves their persons, and seeks to help them out of their sin. Even if he must betimes take to the rod, or some other punishment, in order that the children may see how he hates sin, still the object is always the same, namely, the improvement and welfare of the children. And this picture of a father, which the Lord himself so often uses, teaches us better and more clearly about the righteousness and justice of God than all the books of the scribes [theologians] can do. Take heed, therefore, that you do not allow this picture to be taken out of your heart.

or. But in order that we may see this still more clearly we will cite a couple of Scripture passages. Is. i. 5 the Lord says to the people: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more." There indeed he expressly says that the object of his striking them was that they should not revolt, but return. In Is. ix. 11 and foll. we read of the terrible judgments of God upon the people; and in the midst of the description of these judgments the Lord says: "For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts" (verse 13). See there: All these terrible punishments by which the Lord revealed his burning hatred against all sin, these punishments did not, however, have in view the destruction of the guilty persons, but on the contrary rather this, that they, the guilty persons, should turn to him who had punished them. Only when the sinner no longer can be converted from his sin, only then will that wrath of God which rests upon sin strike him and remain on him for ever. For as he then no more can be separated from his sin, the righteousness of God can never any more manifest itself unto salvation for him, but only unto judgment and condemnation.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

The Lord will teach sinners in the way.

92. We have in the preceding Meditation spoken of what the righteousness of God is. Now David gives a proof of the character of this righteousness when he says: "The LORD is upright, or righteous: therefore [literally: "because of this", or, "for thus"] will he teach sinners in the way." That is: The Lord is so righteous, or upright, just, and well-disposed, that for that very reason he will teach sinners, etc. See there again. To "teach sinners in the way," and to "guide the lowly in judgment," that is, guide them aright and safely, that is the righteousness of God. "Sinners", it is said. Can real sinners be meant? Yes, real sinners. Can great sinners be meant? Yes, great sinners. Can such sinners be meant as must see that they daily commit sin in all manner of ways and deserve naught but punishment? Yes, even such altogether unworthy sinners. "But," you say, "are there no sinners whom the Lord will not teach?" Yes, such as will not allow themselves to be taught, but oppose him and his word. But where there is a sinner who has been reined up to heed the word of God, and now desires nothing more highly than that the Lord might teach him and enlighten his eyes, there it will not fail that the Lord indeed will do it for his righteousness' sake. Even if you think that you are so unworthy, that the Lord surely cannot

desire to have anything to do with you, as you yourself know or feel your heart to be so full of uncleanness, selfrighteousness, obstinacy, etc.; then know this, that here it is not a matter depending on the state and condition of your heart, but on the state and condition of the heart of God. For here it stands: "Good and right [or, upright] is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." As if he would say: "That you are a sinner, that has this effect that you cannot teach yourself, but must go astray and be lost if the Lord does not teach you. And now, although you, on account of your sin, are not worthy that the Lord should teach you, yet he will do so because he is right, a right and proper Being for such things; because one who is right, who is what he ought to be, cannot conduct himself otherwise than rightly, even towards sinners, and such need to be taught, helped, saved." To conduct oneself rightly, piously, and kindly, when one has to do with right and pious people, — that is no righteousness, or piety, worth mentioning; but to act rightly, piously, and kindly, when one has to do with sinners, with perverse people, — that is a right and true kind of piety, and such is the uprightness, or righteousness, and kindness, and entire disposition of God.

93. But how all depends on the Lord's teaching, if we are to learn to know the way, and how he teaches sinners, and only sinners, of this both the Bible and all the history of God's kingdom of grace bear witness. How altogether vain it is to try to attain to this knowledge by one's own study and acuteness, this is shown in the case of the scribes, high priests, and Pharisees of old, who never could find the truth, simply because they seemed to themselves to be very excellent and wise. The same thing can be seen even to-day. O, how many they are who study with all zeal and acuteness, yea, possess superior learning in theology, but still walk in such spiritual darkness that they do not see anything else than error and aberration

in a soul beginning in truth to believe in Jesus. Yes, the Lord himself says: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things fror the wise and prudent [or, understanding], and hast revealed them unto babes" [the child-like, the simple-minded]. (Matt. xi. 25). But how, on the other hand, the Lord teaches ignorant and simple-minded sinners, of this we have witnesses,—God be praised!—in the great company of publicans and sinners of every kind who have found the way, and now believe and live in Jesus. As Paul says: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world," etc. (1 Cor. i. 20, 27). And again: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (Verse 21). While the scribes [theologians] are complaining of all sorts of error and aberration, God goes in among sinners and makes them to know in their hidden parts (their hearts) his saving wisdom. (Cf. Ps. Li. 6). This is indeed to many "a hard saying," which arouses much bitterness; but what of that? It must nevertheless be said. The Lord and his apostles were not sparing even of this kind of talk, and the more generally it now begins to be suppressed, or not mentioned, the more needful it is that some one harps on it. Otherwise there is at hand the danger of beginning to regard that as Christianity which is only theology and a zeal for the law, — a way of thinking, a mistake, which would lead to the destruction of all true and real Christian life. May God keep us watchful.

94. It seems so right and pious, that when a man has honestly studied both science and theology, and then, besides, shown zeal for pure doctrine and moral life, and

moreover when he himself endeavors to lead such a life, - it seems so right and pious then to hope the best and to regard all as quite good and satisfactory. Over against this it always seems harsh and hard yet to come with the questions, "Have you the life? Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?" Such talk occasions uneasiness, and is disturbing, and brings much reproach and suffering upon the person who thus asks. Therefore, also, it is much pleasanter for our old Adam if we keep quiet, especially if we through such silence can gain praise as being nice and pious. But may God keep us watchful. Let us cry and not grow weary; let us say to the deluded souls that knowledge and the works of the law are not the same as life and the fruits of the Spirit. It will cut many to the heart, as when Stephen spoke before the Jewish Council (Acts vii. 54); but still some will listen to it.
95. "In the way," it is further said: "He will teach

sinners in the way." That David here by "the way" means the truth, we have before shown (§28). The life of man here on earth is often likened to a walk, or a journey, towards eternity. And as some are walking towards life, and others towards death, therefore also the Lord speaks of two ways, saying: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. vii. 13, 14). But how, then, shall we find it, and who are they that find it? Answer: By the teaching of the Lord the gate and the way can be found; and he has promised to "teach sinners in [that is, about, concerning] the way." Wherever, therefore, any one comes to him as a poor, stripped, destitute sinner, such a one will he take charge of, and will not suffer such a one to fail in finding the way, nor to miss it when found. Nay, even though he must still be encompassed with much ignorance and many false conceptions about many things, — nevertheless, the way itself he shall not be allowed to miss. For of this the faithfulness of the Lord is a pledge.

- 96. It is indeed comforting to know that, in spite of all the confusion of differing opinions and of differing doctrines, in spite of all ignorance, and in spite of the very weakest intellectual faculties, the Lord will still "teach sinners in the way." The same is seen also in the case of the first disciples of Christ. One cannot but be astonished at the fact that such strange conceptions as they had concerning the Messiah, his kingdom, etc., held sway in their heads, even until after his ascension. But the Lord taught them, and acknowledged them still as his disciples; for amid all confusion and error in knowledge, they nevertheless in their hearts believed in him, believed that he was the Christ, the Saviour, and it was this which made them his disciples. Similar is the condition of things in God's kingdom of grace even to-day. Looking upon all the different opinions and views which are prevailing here and there, one may be ready to despair of finding the truth, and of the cause of truth, yes, even as to whether any truth exist at all. And when one thinks of the simple common people hearing so many voices calling in and towards every direction, why, then the heart wants to burst out a-weeping. But in the meanwhile it is not as desperate as it seems. They that are chaff, they that seem to themselves wise, they are carried away by the winds; but the poor sinners who cry, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us, that we may receive our sight," — these the Lord teaches in the way; and through all mazes, snares, and dangers they will get on in the way and reach its destination.
- 97. If now you know this, then see to it that you remember it and can use it to the comforting of yourself and others when you have come into the dark valleys or you see any one else having come into them. As David says: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow

of death [or, "the valley of deep darkness," as the margin in the Rev. Ver. also correctly renders the expression], I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." (Ps. xxiii. 4). When, therefore, everything seems to be whirling in your head and heart, and all that you have known and believed seems to be shaking and uncertain to you, then is the right time to use this word of God, so that you say: "Lord God, it is dark, very dark; I see nothing and know nothing; whither I turn, 'my ways are inclosed as with hewn stone,' and I see no way of escape. Lord, my God, have mercy upon me a sinner, and lead me. Thou hast said in thy word that thou art good and right, so that thou wilt teach sinners in the way. And now, Lord, behold, I shall be undone and shall perish unless thou dost teach me." - Verily, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed" (Is. Liv. 10), but this promise shall not fail: "They that look unto the Lord shall be enlightened." (Ps. xxxiv. 5*). And there is yet that other promise, and there is no jesting about it: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shall go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps. xxxii. 8). Your darkness may be never so great, still for the Lord darkness is not dark. Your sin and unworthiness may be never so great, still greater

^{*} Here the Swedish Versions, new as well as old, render the statement (and many like it elsewhere) as a general promise, truth, or fact, which indeed it is, not being confined to the past as the Engl. Versions give it: "They looked unto him and were lightened." The Hebrew language has but two tenses, preterite and future, and employs the preterite (past) to express whatever is "regarded as the continuation or natural sequence of a pre-existing action or condition", also "permanent facts or general truths", which as such are "gathered from experience and observation." See e. g. Gen. vi. 13, "is filled" (literally, "was full", i. e., has been and still is full); Ex. xviii. 11, "now I know" (lit., "I knew", i. e., have known and still continue to know); Ps. ciii. 13, "the Lord pitieth" (lit., "pitied", i. e., is accustomed to pity); Is. i. 3, "the ox knoweth" (lit., "knew", i. e., has always known and always will know). — J. G. P.

is the word. "Good and right is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." When you seem to have lost all, and you find yourself as upon a wild pathless sea, then you still have left to you a right and true and faithful Father in heaven, who loves sinners; then you still have left to you a right and true and faithful Brother, Jesus, to whom the Father has entrusted the work and office of saving sinners in his behalf; then there is still left to you the right and true and faithful Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father and is sent by the Father and the Son with the work and office of instructing and teaching and guiding sinners.

98. But do not let it stop with this that you see how comforting it is for plain and simple persons, but also learn from these facts how you are to act towards your brother, if in anything you have more and better light than he has. Look upon Jesus. He indeed had such light as none other ever has had, yea, he himself was and is the truth itself and the light of the world. Still he never did and never does despise the simple and the ignorant; he never quenched the "dimly burning wicks" [thus the marginal reading in the Revised Version of Is. xLii. 3], but he handled them in the most careful way, and sought to be of use to them with his light, so that even they might begin to burn brightly and give light. And if they did not at once allow themselves to be fully taught by him, but still for a long time continued in their own old notions and manners, which the scribes had implanted in them, nevertheless he did not give them up, but was patient with them, and thought that by and by it would possibly be better with them. This example also Paul followed, so that he became as a Jew to the Jews; to them that were under the law, as if also he were under the law; to them that were without law, as if he himself were without law. Yes, he sums it all up by saying: "I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some." (I

Cor. ix. 19—22, Revised Version). But how he exemplified this we see, for instance, in his epistle to the Romans. For in Rome there were certain Christians who were still bound in their consciences by the law of Moses, so that they scrupled to eat meat. This caused others to despise these Christians. But then Paul came to the assistance of these, and showed those others how one must respect weak consciences and not wound them, but with gentleness see to it how they may be helped and set right. For to help and compassionate the weak is always more right and pious than to trample upon them.

99. Behold, this is now also for us the right course and example. Hence, wherever you see any one that is ignorant and is in error, or is astray in his knowledge, while at heart he still wants Jesus, there you ought to think in this way: "God grant that I may be of use to my brother, so that he may come out of that darkness." But if, instead of this, you are offended at him, and become impatient and bitter, then you do not use your light as Christ and the apostles did. For they never used their light to burn the weak, but to enlighten them. God grant that we may rightly consider this. It is very easy to get something hurtful into the body, but not so easy to get it out again. Likewise, also, it is very easy to get an error into the head, but not equally easy to expel it. Therefore, when you see a brother getting into error, or going astray, then teach him, and if he will not at once be taught, be patient with him. The Lord is much concerned about the weak. When all comes about, perhaps it may even be that your brother, with his poorer light, is living in a more unaffected and more intimate union of heart with Jesus than you with your better light. Beware, therefore, of trampling upon him, for so has the Lord Jesus never done to you. Nay, much better it is, with the simple faith of a disciple in the heart, to have the head full of all kinds of errors than to have such a light that one takes

offence at brethren who are weak or are in error as to this or that point.

100. But if you go on exercising yourself in such a course and after such an example, then, no doubt, the devil often comes and says: "Yes, but look here; your brother is not only ignorant, but also stiff-necked and will not allow himself to be taught, or convinced, though you have the clear words of God to put against his error; and then it is right that you thrust him away as not being a brother at all." But do vou answer: "Get thee behind me, Satan! That my brother is in error I see very well; but who has brought him into it, if not you? That, also, he is very stiff-necked and will not readily submit himself to the word of God, that, too, I see very well; but who has made him stiff-necked, if not you? And now, after you have done this, you want me to help you to destroy him! No, get thee hence, Satan! The Lord giving me grace thereunto, I will rather with my light be of use to my brother." - Behold, when you know this and act accordingly, then you are following the example of him of whom it is here written: "Good and right is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." Then, also, will the Lord reward you in some way, may be in this that at some other time he will send you a brother to help you out of some error in which perchance you unknowingly may be now or into which you may come hereafter.

NINTH MEDITATION. He guides the lowly aright.

"The meek [lowly, afflicted, helpless, — the same word in verses 16 and 18] will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." [According to the Swedish Versions and the German of Luther this verse will read in English thus: "He guideth the wretched aright, and teacheth the wretched his way."*] He not only teaches sinners in [of, or about] the way, but he also guides them. "The wretched" [lowly, helpless, humble], says the psalmist; that is, those that are wholly bereft of all their own boasting, or glorying [Rom. iii. 27]; such, for instance, as the publican in the temple, who did not dare to lift up his eyes, but smote his breast and said: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke xviii. 10—13). Or such as the male-

^{*} As to the word "wretched" in this version ("meek" in the Engl. Authorized and Revised Versions, "lowly" in my preferred rendering) see my note at the beginning of the Second Meditation, § 17, page 22. Here the word, whether rendered by "meek", "lowly", or "wretched", is in fact equal to: penitent, such sinners as have been taught "the way" (verse 8),hence, true converts. — The seemingly rather free translation of the Hebrew bammishpat (literally, "in the judgment") by "aright" according to the Swedish and German Versions (Luth.: "Er leitet die Elenden recht") is beautifully plain, strong, and explanatory, even if not as literal as the English Versions have it; and as the Hebrew noun mishpat means judgment, judicial sentence, justice,

factor on the cross, who in his wretchedness looked unto. Jesus and said: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." (Luke xxiii. 40-42). Or such as the sinful woman, who in Simon's house lay at the feet of Jesus and wept. When you have tried everything, in order to make yourself right and pious and worthy, but have come short in all, so that you now see yourself guilty and ruined, and your only hope is in grace, if possibly there be any grace for you yet to be had, then you have become wretched [lowly, helpless, humble, penitent]. It is quite common that when such wretched ones flowly, humble, etc.] read the promises of grace which in the Scriptures are addressed to just such wretched, lowly, helpless ones, then they think that this very wretchedness [lowliness, helplessness must surely be some kind of piety, or worthiness, which they lack, and then they cry out: "Oh! that I only were truly wretched [helpless, humble], but my heart is hard and dead as a stone," etc. This all comes entirely from the deep-rooted idea of our nature that grace must after all come from, or depend upon, our piety. That God should be gracious to those that are really wretched, --- wretched in this way that in them "dwelleth no good thing" [Rom. vii. 18), no piety, but only sin and uncleamness, — this passes far, far above all their thoughts. Do we ask them, "But now is it not wretched

equity, right, the rendering of the adverbial phrase (bammishpat, "in the jud/ment," "in the right") by the adverb "aright" is fully warranted. Thus, "to do judgment" = to do right, or, to do aright. There are many similar Hebrew idioms. Cf. Gen. xviii. 19, %5; 1 Kings iii. 11, 28; Prov. xxi. 3, 7, 15; Ezek. xviii. 5, 19, etc.; Mic. vi. 8; the word is frequently translated "right": Job xxxiv. 6, 17; xxxvi. 6; Ps. ix. 4 (cf. cxii. 5); Is. xxxii. 1, 7; Ezek. xxi. 27, and many other places. Dr. T. J. Conant, in his New Version of the Psalms appended to Lange's (Moll's) Commentary, renders the sentence in the psalm under consideration very righly thus: "He will guide the humble in that which is right." — J. G. P.

that you are so ungodly, cold, hard, and full of unclean desires, full of covetousness, of pride, and many other abominations?" then they certainly must answer that this is, beyond all description, wretched. But still they do not think that they are the poor and wretched of whom the Scriptures speak; no, they rather think thus: "The wretched in the Scriptures must be such as are not *really* wretched, but such as are still pious, and soft-hearted, and God-fearing." Surely it is wonderful that poor, wretched, helpless sinners, who so much need grace, full and free grace, should in such a manner wriggle away and turn aside from the word of grace.

102. Therefore it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to hold this fast, to wit, that the Scriptures in all points mean precisely what they say, and that, consequently, when they speak of the wretched [the afflicted, helpless, lowly] they mean just those that really are wretched, such as have real sins, so that in reality, and not merely in feeling, they are in a wretched state and condition. In the same manner, when you hear how the Lord will most heartily concern himself for the wretched [the afflicted, the lowly] and help them, then take hold of this just as it stands, and do not make any change in it nor add anything to it but this that you believe that the Lord by such words means you; do so especially at times when you more than ever see how it is all over with all your own piety and all your own strength and resources. For at such times it is that the devil transforms himself into an angel of light, and into a preacher who says: "Look here, there must be something wrong, something deceitful, in you; why, certainly it will not do that you in this way continue trusting to grace while you observe in yourself no improvement; that is an altogether too loose doctrine, that gospel on which you are living; until you become entirely different than you are, you have no right to appropriate to yourself the grace of God," etc.

By such preaching he will also soon drive you back under the yoke of the law if you do not in a simple-hearted way abide in the word as it is written and trust in grace for the wretched and the lost ones.

103. In the holy Scriptures there is much said about the wretched [the poor, lowly, afflicted], and it is always some good word the Lord has to say to them. Not in one single place is there a hard word said to them. All the judgments of the Scriptures are for them that have been benumbed, and have made themselves senseless in unrighteousness or self-righteousness, and as such do not care for the Lord or his grace. To those that are in sorrow over their sins, and heartily desire to be righteous, to such the holy Scriptures have only gracious words to say. Be they weak, failing, and wretched in every way. still the Scriptures are always ready to speak kind words of grace to them. They themselves may think that if they had a table of laws that would be very severe on them, and were full of condemnation, then would there indeed be more earnestness and godliness in them; but the Scriptures still always go on speaking of grace and the forgiveness of sins. For the Scriptures know of such wretched ones only one thing: namely, that they have the forgiveness of sins, and stand in the eternal grace and friendship of God. This matter is so decided in heaven, that even their names are already written in the Lamb's book of life. It may, indeed, many times be uncertain to their hearts, but with God it is certain, and the angels also know it, for they have received the charge of God to bear them up in their hands, that they may not dash their feet against a stone. (See Ps. xci. 11, 12; Heb. i. 14). And if they themselves believed it — surely they would do well, and God bids them so gladly welcome to do so.

104. In order that we may now see all this confirmed by the Scriptures, we will here bring forward some

promises which concern the wretched ones [the afflicted, the poor, the helpless, the lowly]. Thus it is said: "And the afflicted people thou (O LORD) wilt save." (2 Sam. xxii. 28). "The needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not* perish for ever." (Ps. ix. 18). "The meek [the lowly] shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Ps. xxxvii. 11). "Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." (Ps. Lxviii. 10). "The meek [the lowly] shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, even he that cannot keep his soul alive." (Ps. xxii. 26, 29**).

^{*} Being thus printed in italics in the Auth. Ver., it would indicate that this "not" is absent from the original; and leaving it out, the sentence would say quite a different thing. The case however is this that, as in the Hebrew the negative stands in the beginning of the verse, the second clause of the verse is so closely connected with the first, that the same negative applies to and covers both clauses, thus: "For not always shall be forgotten the needy, the expectation of the poor perish forever," — "not shall" being understood in the second clause from the first. The insertion of a "nor" in the beginning of the second clause, as is done in the Rev. Ver., or a "not" before the verb, is therefore fully warranted, and is quite necessary in modern languages for the bringing out clearly of the sense. — J. G. P.

^{**} The last sentence in the quotation is the rendering in the Revised Version, which gives a clear thought and makes good connection with the preceding part of the verse, whereas the Auth. Version does not. The feast (i. e., the communion of the people with God) spoken of is for all alike, without distinction of rank or condition: "for those who in "the fat of the earth" abound in worldly prosperity, and for those who have fallen down in the dust,—'dust' being a symbol of filth and thence of lowliness, sorrow, affliction,—those who have de scended from the height of prosperity into such lowliness as may be likened to having fallen in the dust of the earth (not the dust of death); and then, in the next clause, the definite thought steps forth from the veil of the figure and declares that the feast is even for such a poor one as 'cannot keep his soul alive', but is in dan-

"He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." (Ps. Lxxii. 12). "I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor." "The LORD lifteth up the meek" [the lowly, the afflicted]. (Ps. CXL. 12; CXLvii. 6). "The LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek [the lowly, the afflicted] with salvation." (Ps. CXLix. 4). "The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." (Is. xiv. 32). "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." (Is. Liv. 11).

105. Such words sound good indeed, - do they not? Well, then, it is a great pity and harm that the wretched [the lowly and the afflicted] so often allow to slip out of their hands the comfort which they might have from such promises. If, however, only in one single place it read thus, "With the wretched [the poor, lowly, etc.] I cannot continually have patience," or thus, "I cannot promise the wretched any definite grace," - then there might indeed be some occasion for their being uneasy. But to have the most definite words of grace, and still be uneasy as if the words concerned only others or as if the Lord, however, back of the words, had some secret unfavorable thoughts, — that is to torment oneself altogether needlessly. Therefore, be wise and do not let the devil rule in your conscience as he desires, but drive him away from you and say: "Indeed I know that in me there is nothing as it ought to be. My sorrow, repentance, faith, sanctification, and all are such that often I do not know whether I have ever been born again or even

ger of perishing from hunger." (Condensed from Moll on the Psalms in Lange's Commentary). The German of Luther and the Swedish Versions render the clause in question quite freely, but still very plainly and forceably, thus (being translated into English): "and those who live full of anxious cares," — J. G. P.

truly awakened. Often also sin takes me unawares, so that I fall quite grievously, yea, often I see naught else than that I still must be a slave of sin. My wretchedness is therefore great; God knows my misery. But what am I to do? Go back to the world, that I cannot; give myself up to the devil by wholly despairing and by letting all go, neither that can I do; help myself out of my wretchedness, I cannot do that either. Therefore there is naught else for me to do than to leave all and to cast myself on the God of the lowly, the afflicted and wretched." — And in like manner when you see another one that is afflicted and wretched, then say to him: "Look here, dear brother, it is not better with you than me. Do you know what to do? Why, there is no other course for us to take than to begin to believe what God says about the poor and wretched."

106. Here the Lord says through David that "he will guide the wretched [the lowly] aright."* In Ps. xxxii. 8 the Lord says: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." [Revised Version: "I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee"]. In Ps. xxiii. 3 it is said: "He leadeth [guideth] me in the paths of righteousness" — that is, in righteous, or right, paths — "for his name's sake." In Ps. Lxxii. 24 Asaph says to God: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to [or, with] glory." In Ps. CXLv. 14 it is said: "The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down." In Isaiah (xLii. 16) the Lord says: "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." And again: "He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." (Is. XLix. 10). And

^{*} Literally, "the lowly will he guide in the judgment" [or, "in the right"]. Concerning the translation of this expression see my note to § 101, page 108. —J. G. P.

again the Lord says: "They shall come with weeping, and with supplication will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel." (Jer. xxxi. 9). These are indeed good and glorious promises. Just think: when you yourself know nothing, then the Lord will instruct and teach you; when you understand nothing, but only get into confusion and darkness, then he will guide you with his eyes; yea, when you cannot walk, then he will carry you, as he says: "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." (Is. xLvi. 4). And again: "Ye shall be borne upon the side, and shall be dandled upon the knees." (Is. Lxvi. 12, Rev. Ver.). And again: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with [or, in] his arms, and carry them in his bosom." (Is. xl. 11). Therefore, indeed, all wretched [afflicted and lowly] ones may be glad and of good courage. At any rate, there never will be any failing of what the Lord has spoken. If they do not always believe it, "yet he always abideth faithful." (2 Tim. ii. 13). And as it is not according to their faith, but according to his faithfulness, that he acts, so then it must indeed always go well with them.

the lowly aright," this does not mean that he will guide then lowly aright," this does not mean that he will guide them just as they themselves think he ought to guide them. For in general they think that it is getting out of the way as soon as they are getting down into shadowy valleys. In the beginning of their spiritual life, the children of God generally think that the way will become easier and more comprehensible the farther along they get. When, therefore, they experience just the opposite, then they fear that things are not going aright. When I thought—thus one or another will say—that I should find myself more and more free from sin and that I should feel my

heart becoming more godly the longer I lived, but when now, on the contrary, I see only more and more of the wretchedness of my heart, then it seems to me that things are not going aright. When formerly I believed that I would have an altogether clearer and deeper consciousness of sin, and represented to myself that such a consciousness of sin would be a pure feeling of godliness, but when now, on the contrary, I more and more see real sins, and among these even this that my heart is so dead and cold, then I fear that things are not going aright. When, further, I look at other children of God, and they seem to me to have experiences and states that are altogether right according to the word of God, but as for me, on the contrary, when I find that I have not such a deep sorrow for sin as they, nor such a joy as they, nor such a fervent love as they, then again I think that it is not going aright with me. - Now, such things, or circumstances, giving rise to such thoughts, cause great sorrow in the life of the children of God. But what is to be done in the matter? Nothing else than to cast oneself upon the God of the lowly and wretched, saying something like this: "Dear Lord God, this I do not understand, neither do I know how I shall act; it has become so dark, that I do not see my way, nor any way of escape. But thou, Lord, art 'good and upright,' true, right, and kind, and hast promised to plead and maintain the cause of the lowly, the wretched, and the fatherless, and with thine eves to guide aright the poor, the lowly, and the afflicted. And now, Lord God, see to my wretchedness and helplessness, and do what thou hast promised."

ro8. There is an immeasurable security in these words, "The lowly will he guide aright." It does not read, "It may happen that he will guide the lowly aright." No; positive and definite is that word. Even if the guiding must go by ways that they do not know, and by paths that they have not known, yet it must go right. Over stormy

waves it goes right; in sunshine and fine weather it goes right; in and through dark valleys it goes right; through death and the grave it goes right. When he led his people through the desert to Canaan, yea, did then bear them as upon eagles' wings (Ex. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11, 12), then he led them indeed by strange and crooked ways; but to Canaan he led them nevertheless, for that was the promise. They sinned, and he chastised them; but nevertheless he led them, for that was the promise. They doubted and murmured; and he chastised them again, now in one way, now in another; but he led them - that he did notwithstanding. Amid it all he still thought of the oath which he had sworn to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Behold, there is earnest in the promises of God, — they are meant in all seriousness. To visit sins with the rod, and iniquities with stripes (Ps. Lxxxix. 32), — that is what he is wont to do. But to take back his promises, - that is something which he never has done, and neither ever thinks of doing.

109. "But," say you, "if I cannot believe, how will it go then?" Answer: Then it will go so, that he will help your unbelief, as he did for the man of whom in the gospels it is said that he cried out, "Lord, help thou my unbelief." (Mark ix. 24). Perhaps you are astonished at such an answer, but look at some examples. When Sarah did not believe that she would receive a son, but laughed at the word announcing the fact (Gen. xviii.), - did he not then help her unbelief and give her a son? When Zacharias received the promise of the son who was to be the forerunner of the Lord, indeed he too did not believe; but the Lord chastised him, and helped his unbelief, and gave him the promised son anyway. (Luke i.). When Thomas received news that the Lord was risen and had been seen by all the other apostles, then he did not believe; but the Lord manifested himself to him, and helped his unbelief. (John xx.). And how has he dealt with you all the time hitherto? Have you indeed always believed so perfectly? No; a thousand times have you sinned by unbelief; but how has the Lord acted towards you then? Well, you blush, as you indeed have reason to do; but say, has he not all these thousand times helped your unbelief? And can you have anything against his doing the same even hereafter? Behold, there is earnestness and sincerity in the promises of God, even in the days when it goes hard, or poorly, for you to believe.

110. "Well," you say, "but how does this hang together? Is it not written in the Scriptures that 'he that believeth not is condemned already,' that 'the wrath of God abideth on him,' etc.?" (John iii. 18, 36). Yes, it is indeed thus written; but mark here an exceedingly important difference between unbelief and unbelief — between different kinds of unbelief. The ungodly are hostile to the gospel, and will not believe because the gospel disturbs them in their sins; the Pharisees are hostile to the gospel, and will not believe because the gospel condemns their self-righteousness, upon which they are resting their hope; the Scribes hate the gospel, and will not believe because it shows their wisdom to be folly. Behold, all this is the kind of unbelief against which God's judgments of wrath are pronounced in the Scriptures. But besides, there are to be found many poor souls who would esteem it the greatest of all blessedness if they were clearly permitted to believe the gospel; but they think they are not permitted to do so, and therefore cannot, because they are such great sinners, or because the matter seems altogether too great for them. Could they only, or were they only allowed, - behold, God knows that they would not desire anything more. This we see in the case of the disciples of Christ on the first Easter day. They had nothing against the rising of the Lord Jesus from the dead; but when they heard the account of it they could not possibly believe, for the thing itself seemed to them altogether too great. This is something totally different from the unbelief of the enemies. Therefore we see, also, how the Lord Jesus sought them out and helped their unbelief, so that they again attained to faith and again could rejoice in his salvation.

- 111. Therefore: He, the Lord, guides the lowly aright. "He," the Lord,—of him it is said that he does so,—he who has created heaven and earth, and "upholds all things by the word of his power," he who dwells in heavenly majesty, "in the light which no man can approach unto,"—he watches with his eyes open over the lowly, the poor, the wretched, in order that they may not go wrong, or astray. Just think, if a king, a mighty emperor, should meet on the street a poor, lost, forsaken child that could not find its way home, nor even had a home, and he should take it by the hand and lead it home to his own palace and say, "Here, this shall be your home, I will be your father," this would surely be wonderful; but nevertheless it would be as nothing compared with what this is, to wit, that the holy and majestic God "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth '(Ps. cxiii. 6), and guides the wretched [the helpless, the lowly] aright. And yet, why is this so wonderful? To help the wretched and to guide them aright — this is undoubtedly a good work; and why should it be wonderful that he who above all others is good and right [that is, rightly disposed, benignant], why should it be wonderful that he does good works?
- 112. Yes, he guides. It does not say, "He has guided"; nor, "He shall guide"; but, "He guides." This is

^{*} Thus according to the Swedish Versions and the German of Luther. The English Versions have "He will guide," which is indeed quite literally according to the Hebrew; but the Heb. future has the sense of the present "when it (the present) is conceived of as extending into the future"; the future is used also to express "general truths or permanent facts", also "constant or habitual acts"; e. g. 1 Sam. i. 8, "why weepest thou" (lit., "why

his daily and hourly work and purpose. Never does he become sleepy, never tired. There is not in all the Scriptures a single passage, or word, which says that the Lord ever was or ever becomes tired of sinners. But it is narrated that when at one time he was "wearied with his journey", then he was refreshed, as if by food, as he had a chance of helping a poor Samaritan woman to faith. (John iv.). At times sinners surrounded him so that he did not have time to eat, yea, so that he was obliged to enter into a boat, in order to avoid being trampled upon; but tired, or weary, of those sinners he was not. His disciples he took aside, in order that they might "rest awhile" after a journey of theirs; but he never spoke of any rest for himself. (Mark vi. 30 seq.). And as he was then, so he is also now. He is the Man through whom the Father guides the lowly aright; it is the Father who does the works, and it is the Son who in behalf of the Father executes, or accomplishes, them. And thus he continues all the days. [Cf. Matt. xxviii. 20, Marg. Read. in Rev. Ver.]. Be not uneasy. It may perhaps go in a zigzag way, but still it goes homeward; and if it goes homeward, why, then it goes right, for it is homeward you want to go, and home you want to reach, — is it not so? Well, it goes one day, one moment, at a time and at a step; -- one, two, three, and right away you are there. Just wait a little. Soon he will say: "Father, here he is, that poor, wretched one concerning whom thou gavest me the commandment that I should take him by the hand and guide him home to thee."

shalt thou weep?"); Prov. xiv. 34, "righteousness exalteth" (lit., "shall exalt"); Is. xl. 1, "saith your God" (it., "shall say") etc., etc. Therefore the first above-mentioned Versions, together with the Author in the text above, are entirely correct as to sense. What the Author desires to guard against is the notion that the promise concerns only or mainly the future. In fact, also, the English "will" expresses here more of purpose, willingness, and certainty than mere futurity. — J. G. P.

113. But if we ask, "What means does the Lord use, in order to guide the lowly aright?" then the answer will be: "Above everything else, the word of God." Therefore David says: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. cxix. 105). To this also all the children of God bear witness, that what made them children, and what has all the time hitherto kept them so that they still are living and still are in the way, that is alone the word of the Lord. Had they not had that, they would long ago have perished in their wretchedness. (See Ps. cxix. 92). Therefore, also, it is always a matter which characterizes true disciples, that they cannot get along without the word of God, but in everything want to hear and know what the Lord says and how he judges. For they know that without his word they cannot go right. The words of men are good as long as they are in harmony with the word of God, but beyond this they are worthless. When a real important matter is concerned, then this is the chief question: What does God say? All flesh is grass, but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (See Is. xL. 6, 8; 1 Pet. i. 24, 25). That word is the hand whereby God guides the lowly aright.

114. But that it is by the word that the Lord guides the lowly aright, that you can see from your own experience, — if indeed you are a child of God at all. You know that your old heart is naturally full of self-righteousness, always inclined to be proud and to think itself to be something before God. If you have any talent, — then right away the old heart likes to shine by it. If some day you have been able to be remarkably pious, able to deny yourself, yea, able to sacrifice yourself or something valuable of yours to God, quickly you think yourself to be better before God, and would like to have all know it and talk about it. If you do not yourself talk about it, yet your heart would gladly do it, so that it costs you a good deal to desist. If you see any one who knows of your

good work and praises it, - at once you like such a one very much; but if you see any one who despises your piety or does not esteem it highly enough, at once this stings you. If you have prayed more fervently than usual or than others, at once you are pleased with yourself on that account. If you have overcome mighty temptations, at once your heart is inclined to say, "I shall never be moved" (Ps. xxx. 6), and so you begin readily to be offended at the weak, etc. Behold, such is the nature of the old heart. And now: What is it that can, in spite of this nature of the heart, still keep the poor soul in the way, so that it does not fall into the abyss which lies along that side of it? Answer: It is the left hand of the righteousness of God, the holy law, which daily disciplines you, and holds court with you in your conscience, so that you always again come down and never can retain any selfglorying. Oh, how precious and important the divine law is in this its office! Verily, where the law is not thus allowed continually to discipline and daily unclothe the sinner of all boasting and self-glorying, there he cannot long retain the gospel. Therefore it is indeed a grievous error to despise the law.

nt5. But further: What is it that in your distress on account of sin upholds you, so that you do not altogether perish by your wretchedness? You often think that it is all over with you, but still you cannot give up; you know how full of uncleanness your heart is, and you see how often you fall into sin, yea, fall by your own fault entirely, although you know better than thus to fall. That law which is in your members brings you into captivity, so that you do not do what you would, but what you hate. (Cf. Rom. vii. 23, 15). You know in your conscience how fully you deserve all the condemnation which the law pronounces; but still you are holding on in faith and hope. On it goes with you slowly and through dire distress; but on it goes nevertheless. You fall, but you

can never remain lying in your fallen condition; you must, however, always rise up again, etc. What is it that thus upholds you, so that the devil, in spite of all his work, cannot drag you down into the pit which lies on that side of the way? Answer: It is the right hand of the righteousness of God, the holy gospel, which thus mightily sustains you, and which daily leads you to the cross, to the blood of Jesus, wherein you have cleansing from all your sins, and righteousness, and life, and peace, so that you at times can sing with all boldness: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20). Verily, when one sees how the children of God have their delight, their life, their all, in the gospel; how they must live upon it as upon daily bread; how it is the gospel, which helps them to sing the praise of Jesus, - the gospel, which gives them the happiest moments they have in this life, - the gospel, which gives them that holy state of mind according to which they can no longer take pleasure or even exist in sin, - the gospel, which gives them love to the children of God, — the gospel, which helps them to overcome sin and the world, — the gospel, which gives them victory over death, yea, so complete a victory that they even triumphantly can trample upon him who to the world is a "king of terrors", etc.; - when one beholds all this and yet more that is similar, then one can easily understand how it is especially by the gospel that the Lord guides the lowly aright.

God are still hampered by the flesh, which easily besets them, and tempts them in a thousand ways to walk unworthily of the gospel. Here one can see a Christian man or woman who by the flesh is drawn into worldliness; there a Christian merchant who is tempted not to deal openly, honestly, and truthfully; there a Christian

buyer who is tempted to haggle about a bargain and to beat down the seller; there a Christian employer who is tempted not to give his workmen their just wages; there a Christian workman who is tempted to do his work negligently when no one sees him; there a Christian master who is tempted to be hard and even unreasonable in his demands upon his servants; there a Christian servant who is tempted to be unfaithful, gainsaying, negligent, careless, etc. Yes, who can enumerate all the snares in which the devil seeks to catch the children of God! Behold, you know it, perhaps from your own experience if you but review it carefully. And what is it then that still guides you aright amid all these snares, — that looks you up again in whatever crooks and corners you may be found, - that corrects and teaches you, - that stirs up your pure mind to fight against the flesh and the world, and always again makes your heart realize the importance of living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world? Answer: It is that one and the same gospel which is so full of loving encouragements, faithful exhortations, and earnest warnings. Yes, just think how many a time, when you came near going to sleep over an important matter, the Lord has struck you with a word of admonition, started you up, and again taken you away from a senselessness into which you were near falling. If you rightly consider this you will learn heartily to thank God even for that part of the gospel which is called admonition and exhortation.

117. But, while we now have been saying that the word is the first and principal means by which the Lord is guiding aright the lowly, we do not wish to say, however, that it is the only means. When the Lord was about to be separated from his disciples he gave them his body to eat and his blood to drink, and thus instituted for their benefit his holy Supper to be a help for them against the flesh, the world, and the devil. "Take and eat," — he

says, - "this is my body"; "take and drink, this is my blood." "Do this in remembrance of me"; "do it often." As if he would say; "When you get tired in the way, then gather here, and break the bread among one another; with it refresh your dejected hearts, and strengthen your feeble knees. When you have sinned, then gather here, eat and drink; here is the body which was given for you, and the blood which cleanses from all sins. If the word is beginning to seem old, and your ears are getting heavy, then gather here, break the bread among yourselves, and taste and see that the Lord is good. If disagreements begin to rise among you, then gather here, break the bread among yourselves, and say: 'Brethren, behold, we are indeed one body as surely as we are partakers of that one bread; let us, therefore, not wrangle among ourselves and tear ourselves to pieces." — In short: When you feel yourself cold, wretched, desolate and sinful, weak in confession, etc., then know that the holy Communion is a precious means by which God is accustomed to guide aright the lowly.

118. Finally, God has still another means which he uses to guide the lowly aright; namely, the dear cross. Yes, "the dear cross," say all; but no one believes that it is dear, except so long as one is free from bearing it. Yet the cross is God's rod, with which he chastens those whom he loves; it is God's knife, with which he purges the fruit-bearing branches, in order that they may bring forth more fruit; it is God's furnace, or crucible, in which he polishes and refines faith. The cross is a means by which God leads his people to consider their sins, as the prophet Jeremiah (in Lam. i. 14) says in behalf of Israel, "The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his [the Lord's] hand," and as we read in Hosea v. 15 where the Lord says, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early" [or, better, "earnestly", as the Rev. Ver. has it]. The cross is a means by which God produces patience, experience, and a sure hope. (See Rom. v. 3, 4). The cross is a means by which the Lord draws sinners to himself, as Isaiah says: "LORD, in trouble have they visited thee [literally, "have they looked for thee"], they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." (Is. xxvi. 16). And in Hosea (v. 15 and vi. 1) the Lord says: "In their affliction they will seek me earnestly, saying, 'Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." [Revised Version]. The cross is a means by which God teaches us to give heed to his word, as the entire history of God's people testifies, and as God himself often says, for instance in Ezek. vi. 10: "They shall know [by inflicted punishments, captivity, etc.] that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them." The cross is a means by which God teaches his children to pray, as David says: "In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God." (Ps. xviii. 6). The cross is a means by which God keeps his children and servants from spiritual pride, as Paul say: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." (2 Cor. xii. 7). The cross is a means by which God subdues the rule of the flesh, as Peter says: "For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 Pet. iv. 1). The cross is a means by which God shows that he loves us and acknowledges us as his true children, as Heb. xii. 7 and 8 says: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.... But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." The cross is a means by which God awakens in his children a longing for heaven, as Paul says: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17). Behold, that is a blessed means, that dear cross, to lead the lowly

aright.

119. But inasmuch as David adds, "And the lowly [the helpless, poor, afflicted] will he teach his way," by this he repeats the same thought which he expressed in the preceding verse thus: "He will teach sinners in the way." No man can teach sinners the way of God. Therefore it is said: "They shall be all taught of God." (John vi. 45; Is. Liv. 13). Men can bring the word to the ears of others; it is God alone who makes it a living thing, a living reality, in their hearts. Therefore we see, also, that the same sermon, which makes one person extraordinarily happy and blessed, does not at all affect another; the same word, which at one time is to my taste as wood, or sand, can at another time be to me sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; the passage which I have read a hundred times without seeing anything in it, that same passage may at the one-hundred-and-first reading become to me the source of infinite teaching, the spring of many an invaluable lesson. God it is who gives to the one this, in one way, and to the other that, in another way; at one time more, at another time less; and it is aiways to the lowly that he gives, as it is said: "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." (Luke i. 53). Therefore, this is the sum of the text: The lowly the Lord teaches, and he teaches them no whims and notions and devices of man, but his truth; the lowly the Lord guides, and aright he guides them, and when and where they cannot walk he carries them. And all this he does year after year, without money and for naught, for his own name's sake, because he is "a father to Israel" — to those who yet and at any time are his people, — as he himself has said. (Jer, xxxi. 9).

TENTH MEDITATION.

"All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth."

"All the paths of the LORD are mercy [more properly, grace*] and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." "All the paths of the LORD", that is, all the ways, or manners, in which the LORD", that is, all the ways, or manners, in which the Lord (Jehovah) leads his children, his people, in this world. That now here is not meant the life-giving, the saving truth, that is evident; because that truth, that way, is only one. "I am the way," says the Lord Jesus (John xiv. 6); but he does not say, "I am one of the ways." "I am the light," he says (John viii. 12; ix. 5); but not, "one of the lights." "I am the truth," he says. (John xiv. 6). Hence, in this respect, there can never be any question about more than one way. All other ways are not God's ways, but by-ways, wrong, astray-leading ways. But in the Scriptures "God's

^{*} It is the same word which in verse 6 is translated (in the Auth. Ver.) "lovingkindnesses", but in verses 7 and 10 "mercy." The Rev. Ver. is here more consistent, giving in all three places "lovingkindness" (plural, correctly, in verse 6). See preceding Meditations on these verses, especially sections 53, 70, 73, and 74. The Old Swedish Version has "goodness", also here in verse 10; but the New Proof-Translation has (in verses 7 and 10) "grace", which certainly is the more proper word here, especially in the significant combination with "truth." Cf. Ps. Lvii. 3; Lxi. 7; Lxxxv. 10; Lxxxvi. 15; Lxxxix. 14; Prov. iii. 3; xiv, 22; xvi. 6; xx. 28; John i, 14, 17, -J, G, P.

ways," or "God's paths," mean those different "ways," or manners, or methods, which the Lord uses in leading his people through life and the world; as when the Lord in Is. Lv. 9 says: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways." And as Paul says: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33). And as David says: "The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and gracious in all his works." (Ps. cxlv. 17, Rev. Ver.).

- 121. That the paths, or ways, of the Lord are different for different children of his, to this both the Scriptures and experience bear witness. When God led Abraham, and let him be a stranger everywhere; when he commanded him to offer his son, etc.; when Jacob had to flee from the face of his brother Esau; when Joseph was sold by his brethren, became a slave in Egypt, was cast into prison, was exalted to honor; when his brethren were driven by want into Egypt; when Jacob, then called Israel, "warrior of God," moved with all of his household to Goshen, a district in Egypt; when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt; when the insignificant David was exalted from the employment of a shepherd to the position and office of a king; when he then had to flee from before Saul, etc.; when Paul was taken prisoner and brought to Rome; - behold, then were these all really the paths and ways of the Lord, for it was the Lord, who was in and conducted them all.
- r22. Likewise, it is also the Lord's paths and ways when he puts one in this place, and another one in another place; when he lets one be rich, another one poor, one well, another one sick; when he gives to one a good wife or husband, to another one a worthless wife or husband; when he gives to one many children, to another one no children; when he lays upon one this cross, upon another one another cross; when he lets one get into this danger,

another one into another danger, and helps them out of it, the one in one way, the other in another way. Yes, who can enumerate all the different paths and ways in which the Lord leads his people? The whole life of a Christian is full of examples, and always have the ways of the Lord been different with each one. Just as we never find in the woods two leaves or in the meadows two blades of grass which look or are made precisely alike, so neither do we find two Christians whom the Lord leads precisely alike. In his ways there is an infinite richness and an immeasurable depth.

123. These paths and ways of God are often wonderful, that is, such that one cannot comprehend them. At times it may indeed be clear enough what he means. I once knew a believing clergyman who became heir to considerable earthly riches. He then became interested in lumber business and also in some other affairs. Thereby his spiritual life became dull and drowsy. But behold, the Lord had mercy on him and let him, through fraudulent transactions of another man, lose all his possessions There the way of God was easily understood. But often his ways are past tracing out. Some remain here in time always hidden, mysterious, and incomprehensible; as when the Lord suffered John the Baptist, after so short an activity, to be cast into prison and there leave his head as a reward for the charming dance of a frivolous woman. Other ways of God are incomprehensible for a time, but afterwards become quite intelligible, plain, and clear. No one could comprehend God's way with Joseph when he suffered him to be sold into Egypt, when he let him be cast into prison, etc.; but after fifteen years everything was clear, and men could see how the finger of God had directed everything with a certain definite purpose. But while all was going on no one but the Lord himself understood the connection. When Paul was brought to Rome, then no one understood God's way with him, but

afterwards all became clear, so that Paul confessed that all that had happened unto him had "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. i. 12). Then, also, some ways of the Lord are incomprehensible to those who must be walking in them, while on the contrary they may be very clear and comprehensible to those who only stand and look on. In short: the ways of God are manifold, at times clear, but often strange and mysterious; as he says: "I will bring them by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." (Is. XLII. 16).

- 124. But whether these ways of the Lord are clear or unaccountably mysterious, it is important for us to consider that they are the Lord's ways. A man who had lost his little child, and was so grieved thereby that he was inaccessible to all consolation, awoke at last as from a stupor, and received an inexpressible peace simply through a brother's pointing out that it was the Lord, who had done it. Yes, if we considered only this, then already that would help us out of many a dark valley. But who considers this? When the Lord gives us good and peaceful days, then it is no difficulty to believe that it is he who is doing it, - unless we become so dull and senseless that we do not see anything. But when he takes our possessions, our good name and reputation, our health, or anything else which seems to us altogether indispensable, who then believes that it is he? Especially if we lose any of the things mentioned through the falsehood, deceit, fraud, or violence of wicked persons, - who then believes that it is the Lord, who is doing it? But that is what he desires us to exercise ourselves in believing. For anyway, in every case, all that happens to his children is his work, whether it be joyous or sorrowful, even to the falling of a hair from off their heads.
- 125. Therefore, when you see around you your wife, husband, or children, healthy and happy; when you have

a comfortable and good home, enough of food, clothing, and such like things; then consider that all this comes from God. For if you habitually think thus it will fill your heart with joy and heavenly delight, and at the same time it will help you against covetousness, pride, and spiritual lethargy. On the other hand, if you must carry to the grave one child after another of your own, or must sit in needy circumstances and eat your bread amid anxious cares, then think and say thus: "It is only the Lord; it is simply his doings." His ways are indeed wonderful, but nevertheless they are his. If you consider this it will give you courage and strength to live and work. But if you do not consider this you will become melancholy, discouraged, and powerless, and thereby only make your condition worse and your cross heavier than the Lord had intended that it should be. When Peter and the other disciples had toiled a whole night and yet had caught no fish, then this was of the Lord. When they afterwards in one draught caught so many fishes that the boats began to sink, then also this was of the Lord. (See John xxi.). In short, as we have already said: in joy and in sorrow, in prosperity and in adversity, in rest and in conflict, in good and in bad report, when your heart is filled with life and gladness, and when you feel your heart dead and cold, then say, "It is the Lord, only the Lord, the Lord my God." For even if you do not say so, it is nevertheless he.

126. Here David now says concerning all of God's ways that they are merciful [according to the Swedish, good; more corretly, gracious*]; yea, really, right out he says that they are mercy [or goodness, or grace]. By his using such an expression he desires the more sharply to present the matter itself, as when we say, "This or that

^{*} See my note at § 120, on page 128, as to the use of these words in the verse under consideration; also the Author's own remarks farther on, in § 129. — J. G. P.

one is goodness itself," that is, he is good beyond all usual limits, or measure. Hence, as applied here: good, beyond all measure, or bounds, is everything that God does. And what else should we expect, if we think upon it more closely? Who indeed should do that which is good, if not he? What he does, that does not always taste good, but it is good, and that is the main thing. When parents chastise their children, that does not taste good, but it is good; and in the future, when they, the children, come to a better understanding, they will thank their parents more for the rod than for all the sweatmeats they received. Therefore, whatsoever God sends you, even if it is strange or tastes bitter, so do know this: It is all good, very good. Therefore David says in another place, speaking to the Lord: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" (Ps. xxxi. 19). And again: "Thy mercy [properly, "grace"; the Revised Version has "lovingkindness"], O LORD, is in the heavens*, and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." (Ps. xxxvi. 5; cf. Lvii. 10; Cviii. 4). And again: "How excellent is thy lovingkindness [or, grace], O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." (Ps. xxxvi. 7). And again: "Surely goodness and mercy [grace] shall follow me all the days of my life." (Ps. xxiii. 6). Therefore, also Paul says: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Rom. viii. 28). Prosperity and adversity, height and depth, honor and dishonor, life and death — all, all work together for good to the children of God. Therefore, also the Lord says: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." (Ps. xci. 10).

* According to the Swedish and German Versions, "Thy

*According to the Swedish and German Versions, "Thy goodness, O Lord, reaches as widely as the heavens", — thus taking the preposition "in" (Hebrew, "b") to mean "as," "lıke," or, "in the manner of," a meaning which the Heb. prep. certainly often has, e. g., Ps. xxxvii. 20, "into smoke" — "like smoke" (see Rev. Ver.); Is. xLiv. 4, etc. — J. G. P.

Just think: "no evil." Everything must be good. O Lord God, where are our eyes, that we do not see anything! Lord, increase our faith.

- 127. It is narrated of the old church father Chrysostom, who lived about four hundred years after the birth of Christ, that no matter what happened to him he would cry out: "Glory to God for all things." On that account, also, his enemies were greatly at loss as to what they should do when they wished to harm him. To cast him into prison, — that would not do; for then he would become like John the Baptist, and then he would say glory to God for that. To scourge him, - neither that would be of any use; for then he would be like Christ and his apostles, and then he would say glory to God for that. To take away from him his possessions, - neither would that be of any use; for then again he would become like Christ, who "had not where to lay his head" (Luke ix. 58), and then he would give thanks to God for that. To bestow possessions upon him, in order to ensnare him, neither that would be of any use; for he would give them to the poor, and give thanks to God for that. To kill him, — that would surely least of all be of any use; for then he would get to heaven too soon, and would there begin to thank God forever. Yes, indeed, — it is not an easy thing to harm those whom God has promised that "no evil shall befall them, neither any plague come nigh their dwelling." The promises of God are walls which are no easy things to break through, or break down.
- motto of God's children: "Glory be to God for everything." For it does all come from God and is good. This would be rightly to disarm the devil and all enemies. For the devil is only after harming the children of God and bringing them to despair. Were he now to see that with all his assaults he accomplishes nothing else than the driving of the children closer to their Father and the a-

wakening of them to a constant praising of God, why, then he would find that he had nothing at all for all his trouble; as also, - God be praised, - the history of God's kingdom of grace witnesses how the enemies of this kingdom have often stood nonplused and at their wits' end when they have seen that all their exertions to smother the gospel - exertions by craft, force, or other means - have turned out so poorly in their interest that the children of God have become only the gladder and the more courageous. Therefore Paul says: "We glory in tribulations also." (Rom. v. 3). And what does the present time witness? Would not indeed the ungodly like to root out the Christians? Would not indeed the scribes like to smother the gospel? Yes, indeed; liking, or inclination, for such things is not wanting, but they stand there at their wits' end and do not know what to undertake. For they almost feel that if they undertake anything, then there is danger at hand that they thereby only advance what they desire to uproot. In the meanwhile they hope that intelligence and "enlightenment" shall gradually do it,—just as if some one should think that if only many lamps and lights were lighted upon the earth, then might one well succeed in putting out or doing away with the light of the sun. No; the Lord laughs at his enemies. Whatever they undertake against his kingdom, that he so overrules and directs that to his children it must be said of it all: "It is the way of the Lord, and it is only pure grace and goodness." Such a condition of things affords perfect safety. God grant that we might rightly understand it.

signify grace, and is the same word used in verse 6 [and there translated "lovingkindnesses"]. His words here, therefore, really read thus: "All the paths [or, ways] of the LORD are grace," — that is, such a goodness as exceeds all our deserts and merits and worthiness, a goodness which is not overcome or weakened by our sins, but

which reigns and is mighty over all our sins. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy [more correctly, grace] toward them that fear him," says therefore David in another place. (Ps. ciii. 11). Yes, Paul exclaims: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" [or, according to the Revised Version, "grace did abound more exceedingly"]. (Rom. v. 20). Such a goodness, or grace, also, sinners need: a goodness, or grace, which, instead of being blotted out by their sins, on the contrary abounds over, overflows, and blots out all their trespasses; a goodness, or grace, which separates them and their transgressions from each other "as far as the east is from the west." (Ps. ciii. 12). Such a goodness, or grace, also, God shows in everything he does to and with his own. The roof which like a heaven covers the house of God on earth, can truly be named grace; and all that God does to and with his people he does under this roof, even when "he visits their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." (Ps. LXXXIX. 32).

130. "All the paths [ways] of the Lord," - sing thus, — "all the paths [ways] of the Lord are goodness, or grace." That is a high and heavenly song, and it grates the ears of the devil and makes them tingle, so that he would gladly that we were silent as to that song, or at least that we would use a lower key and sing a text like this: "Some of the ways of the Lord," etc. But do you keep on singing, "all." And if you cannot always very well come up to so high a pitch, still exercise yourself in the singing. Begin it when you are in the green pastures and beside the still waters, in order that you may have some practice when you come into the dark valley. Now let us hear it: - "All - -." Yes, that's it. You sing rather poorly, but what you sing is nevertheless true, and to sing truth a little poorly sounds any way better than to sing falsehood well Therefore, now we begin again: — "All the paths of the Lord are mercy." Well then, that was

right; thus it's to go; keep on practicing a little by little, a little at a time. The Lord likes those who are willing to learn. In heaven it will be better with the singing.

131. "And truth," says David. "All the paths [ways] of the Lord are truth"; that is, the Lord in his works never departs from his words, from that which he has spoken. To our eyes, at times, it may seem as if he did; but this is only an illusion. When he first gave Abraham the promise of a numerous posterity and then let him wait several years before he gave him a son, then it looked as if he had swerved from his truth; but it was not so. Likewise, when he gave him commandment about the sacrificing of Isaac, then it seemed as if he would act contrary to his promise, for just with Isaac the promise was connected; but it only appeared so. That men have forgotten the promises of God, and have despaired of the possibility of their fulfillment, that has been and yet is more than common. The most conspicuous example of this we see in the behavior of the disciples of Jesus when he, their Master, was crucified. For then the disciples gave up everything as lost. No longer did they the least think of all that the Lord had spoken concerning his rising again. But that God has forgotten a single word of all that he has spoken, or that he has dealt with any sinner otherwise than he before has promised in his word, that is something which has never happened since the foundation of the world nor ever before, and never will happen unto the end of it nor ever after, either. Thus the Scriptures say: "Thy mercy [lovingkindness, or grace], O LORD, is in the heavens;* and thy faithfulness reacheth

^{*} Or, 'is as the heavens'; that is, ''reaches as widely as the heavens." See the second note to § 126, page 133. The Swedish and German Versions render the latter clause of the verse thus (translated into English): "and thy truth as widely as the clouds go" [or, 'as the skies extend"]. This gives certainly a clear and also correct meaning, even though it be less literally according to the Original. — J. G. P.

unto the clouds." (Ps. xxxvi. 5). And again: "The LORD is good; his mercy [grace] is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations." (Ps. c. 5). And again: "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations." (Ps. cxix. 89, 90). And again: "Mercy [grace] shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Ps. Lxxxix. 2); "thy faithfulness is round about thee" (verse 8); "mercy [grace] and truth go before thy face" (verse 14, Rev. Ver.). And again: "O LORD, thou art my God; ... thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." (Is. xxv. 1). And again: "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: which [who] keepeth truth for ever." (Ps. cxlvi. 5, 6).

132. It is one of the chief tricks by which the enemy of souls disquiets the children of God when God their Father deals strangely with them, — namely, this is then that enemy's trick, that he does then misrepresent to their eyes or thoughts the doings of God even so far and in such a way that it seems to them as though he, the Lord, were acting altogether differently from what he has spoken in his word. In such distress Asaph cried: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Is his mercy [grace] clean gone for ever? doth his promise [literally, a word] fail for evermore?" (Ps. Lxxvii. 9, 8). In these questions thousands upon thousands since the psalmist's time have joined. Thus says another singer (in Ps. Lxxxix. 49): "Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses [or, mercies; more properly, "graces," that is, "proofs or manifestations of thy grace"], which thou swarest unto David in thy truth" [or, "which thou didst swear to David in thy faithfulness"]. As long as we still can hold it certain and sure that the Lord faithfully keeps all that he has promised, so long darkness is never really dark. But when one's heart begins to doubt the truth and trustworthiness of that which God has spoken, then one feels and is ready to exclaim as is written in Ps. Lxxxviii. 3: "My life draweth nigh unto the grave" [or rather, "unto Sheol," the underworld, the dominion of death]. In that heat many of the saints of God have wished themselves dead, and even unborn; and had not the Lord upheld them freely and graciously, the devil would have devoured them.

133. Just think: while the Lord in his word promises to have such a care for his own that not a hair shall fall from their heads but by his will, yet at times he suffers many of them to come into such need and such anxieties that it seems as though he did not wish to allow them and their children their daily bread, and this while his enemies are gorging themselves in abundance and luxury, - surely, this seems strange. Now, they have the promise that they may pray. This they do; and now again there stands before them the promise, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Is. Lxv. 24). But, behold, though the words of promise stand there, it seems as though God never thought of the thing promised in those words. It is as if he had altogether stopped up his ears, or as if he had "turned to be cruel." (Job xxx. 21). Now the poor distressed soul also reads or hears one proof after another of the answering of prayer. This comforts the soul, and it waits and hopes again; but again it seems to be put to shame. There, now it does indeed look critical, precarious, terrible. What is one in such circumstances to think of the truth of God? Behold, then comes the devil and says: "Where now is your God?" Oh, how that cuts into the heart! But in such darkness still to be able to say, "All the ways of the Lord are truth," that is a difficult art.

134. But still worse it becomes when a believing soul must fight with some mighty and persistent temptation to sin. To know that God is displeased with sin,

but, in spite of that, nevertheless to feel one's heart full of unclean desires; to know that God could at any time give deliverance from that sin, but still again and again be a-tumbling into it; to have in the word of God clear and definite promises of help, and on account of these promises be a-calling and a-crying out, but still see no change for the better, — that is distress, terrible distress. Lo! there the devil comes again and says: "Where now is your God? Do you not see that you are 'given up unto a reprobate mind'? It is no use for you to try any more. You are any way accursed and devoted to destruction by the Lord," etc. Such things no one understands who has not been in them. Paul has in Rom. viith described this distress thus: "That which I do I allow not [better, "I know not," or, "I do not understand"; that is, "it is to me - I am to myself - an insolvable riddle when I look at what I am doing": for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" [Or, "out of this body of death?" that is, this body subject to death, to the workings of death spiritually and physically, this sin-drenched human nature]. - Yes, it is as if one were in a state of dizziness when the law of sin, which is in the members, brings the soul into captivity to do that which it hates. One would gladly give all, yea, life itself, to be free from sinning — God knows it, — but still — —. In such darkness the devil has whispered to more than one of God's poor, distressed, afflicted ones: "Look here, it would be best that you made away with your life." O Lord God, thou who seest the misery of such lowly ones, the wretched, and hearest their cry, thou knowest it all. Verily, in order to hold out in such distress, and in it continue to

^{*} From the Author's (P. W.'s) "The New Testament: A New Translation, with Explanatory Notes", — at the passage in question (Rom. vii. 15). — J. G. P.

confide in the truth of God, — to do so the power of God is needed.

- 135. "Well," you say, "when I, however, clearly see that things are happening to me just contrary to the promise of God, how then can I confide in the word?" Answer: Do not say, "clearly see"; nay, surely you see very badly. The truth of God has never failed, nor deceived. That his ways are incomprehensible, — that however is not yet the same as that they might be untrue. That they are dark, thorny, and difficult, - neither that is the same as that they might be untrue. No; only wait yet a little longer; wait until you see the end. All is not yet finished. All the way and time hitherto not one single thing has failed of all that God has spoken; and with you, surely, no new order of things in the world is to begin, so that it shall be said: "That time God departed from his truth, a thing which never before happened since the foundation of the world." Nay; only be quiet. Say to the Lord: "Thou art my God. Thy wonderful ways and government I do not understand; but if thou wilt keep thy truth, and do with me as thou hast promised in thy word, then I am content. As to the rest, thou mayest rule and guide as thou wilt; only let me trust in thy truth."
- When he rejoices the heart of his own, then he does so according to the promise; when he chastens them, he does so according to the promise. He has promised to bring them to heaven; and when that cannot be done without affliction, then he must let them be afflicted. That they do not always trust in his truth, that does indeed affect his heart; but what's to be done? If I promise anything to any one, and my promise is not believed, I must still give it for the sake of my own truthfulness. And how much more must not he who is the truth do what he has promised? The promises of God are not made strong by my faith; neither do they become shaky by my unbelief.

No; he goes before and speaks and acts, then he lets me follow and hear and believe. But if my faith fail, still he will do as he has said without inquiring about my want of understanding or my unbelief. The Lord remembers his covenant forever, the word which he has promised, as well as the word which he has commanded, as the psalmist intimates (in Ps. cv. 8): "He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations." "For ever," it is said; hence, not only in the moments when you think of his word and his covenant, but also in the moments when you quite forget them; not only in the moments when you feel devout, pious, and good, but also in the moments when you feel your heart to be cold, dull, and dead. When he notices that you are a sinner who needs and is looking for help, then he does not sit and consider whether or not you are worthy, but then he considers only the fact that he has promised to help sinners; and then he proceeds to act accordingly, whether you at the time understand his doings or not. When all is done and finished, then you shall understand it. Yes, it is absolutely certain that all, even the strangest, of the paths, or ways, of God are truth. Only waic a little. It may yet take a year or two, but soon all will be clear. "Now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Is. xLiii. 1—3). There you hear: to escape going through fire and water, — as to that you have no promise; but that the Lord shall be with you, so that neither water shall drown you nor fire consume you, these are his own certain and faithful words.

And that the Lord forever keeps his word, — that is one of those things upon which we can altogether safely depend.

- 137. Therefore, sing also here again and again: "All the ways of the Lord are truth." And if at times tears are about to stifle your voice, then still try to say: "All the ways of the Lord are truth." In the darkest valleys, where you see no way of escape, creep close to the Lord, and sing or say: "Lord, all thy ways are indeed truth. Hearken, O my heart, fear not; it is indeed dark, but all the ways of the Lord are truth. He has at any rate promised that the deep waters shall not overflow me." But if you cannot sing it or say it, then lie down and weep in the presence of the Lord; but if you cannot even weep, why, then appear any way before him, and say only something like this: "Lord, thou seest how it is; now everything depends on thy truth — solely on thy truth." Verily, heaven and earth shall pass away, but of that which the Lord has promised not a word shall fail. Therefore, hear yet once more the words, and repeat them after me: "All the paths [ways] of the Lord are truth, are grace and truth."
- 138. But David adds: "unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." By these words he shows who they are that have this sure and certain comfort which he has just set forth, namely, those who keep the covenant and the testimonies of God; that is, those who confide in his promises and the covenant which he has made in Christ for all men and all times. As to those who despise his covenant and testimonies, even to them he would do the greatest possible good,—Oh, how gladly he would draw them to his Son and save them! but so long as they despise him they are going their own ways, and those ways are not grace and truth, but destruction and death. For while they are upon those ways the wrath of God abides upon them. Upon those, on the contrary, who cleave to his covenant, who have their life in the covenant and in

that testimony which God has given of his Son, upon them there are resting eternal grace, faithfulness, and truth. Against and away from all the attacks of the world, of the devil, and of the flesh, they have a refuge under the shadow of his wings, and those wings may be called truth, and their shadow may be called grace. In, or from, all storms, both internal and external, "he covers them with his feathers" (Ps. xci. 4), and those feathers may be called grace and truth. In short: from all enemies and from all evil "he keeps them secretly in his pavilion" (Ps. xxvii. 5, Rev. Ver.), and the name of that pavilion is grace, and of its foundations truth.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

"Pardon mine iniquity."

I.

130. In the seventh verse David has prayed: "Remember not the sins of my youth." Here he now repeats this prayer, but makes it more general, more comprehensive as to sins, and says: "For thy name's sake, 0 LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." (Verse 11). For, as we have before remarked, when the heart is oppressed with sin it cries again and again for grace and forgiveness. Also in the eighteenth verse of this psalm David again repeats this same prayer, saying: "Look upon mine affliction [lowliness, wretchedness, helplessness, — there is the noun of the same word that in verse 9 is translated "meek"] and my pain; and forgive all my sins." David, the man after God's own heart, had in exactly the same way the feelings and experiences which the poor saints of God still have, even to-day. Hence, also, it happens that when the children of God read the psalms of David it often appears to them as if the words were taken right from their own hearts; yes, when they themselves cannot express what is stirring in their hearts they find words and expressions for it in the psalms of David. As Luther says: "Every one, whatever his condition may be, still finds in the Psalter words and psalms which for him and in his case are serviceable, and as applicable to his case as if they had been

placed there for his sake alone, so that he could not anywhere find nor himself compose nor even desire any better. This thing is good also for this reason, that when such words please any one and well agree with him, then thereby he becomes satisfied that he is in the communion of saints, and that all saints have fared as he is faring, because they with him sing the same song."

140. The verse before us contains two parts: — a confession and a prayer; the confession coming first in the order of thought, though put last in words. Hence, as his iniquity is first thought of, David, in the first place, confesses that he has iniquity, and that too a great iniquity, or "much," or "abundant," iniquity, as the word primarily and most properly means. This, also, is a confession which often recurs in the psalms. Thus he confesses in Ps. xxxviii. 4: "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And again in Ps. xL. 12: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." And again in Ps. xxxi. 10: "My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed" [or, "wasted away"]. Also in Ps. Li. 1-3 he prays: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness [grace]: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." In Rom. viith also Paul confesses: "That which I do I allow not [rather, "I know not," or, "I understand not]: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." - When the Lord taught his disciples to pray, then he taught them to say also this, "Forgive us our sins" (Luke xi. 4), which prayer

contains a distinct confession of sin. For where one prays for forgiveness, there one confesses himself yet to be a sinner; as Luther, among other things in explanation of this prayer, says: "We sin daily in many ways, and deserve naught but punishment." And David cries out to God: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. CXLiii. 2).

- 141. From this we learn two very important things: to wit, first, that it must be some dreadful enchantment or delusion when a man comes to this that he thinks himself to be without sin, so that he no longer needs to confess any iniquity or beg for cleansing from any sin in the blood of Jesus. John explains the matter when he says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John i. 8). Those are clear words, that thus declare that where such sinlessness is professed, there it is simply a self-deception, an enchantment, by the father of lies, and not a real freedom from sin; no, but such an infatuation and blindness that one does not see his sin. Thus one will not allow sin to be sin, but lowers the requirements of the law, as did also the Pharisees of old, who too, in this way, became sinless, but mark, sinless in their own eyes; that was all. In the eyes of God they were sinful and guilty nevertheless, and then it did not help them that they appeared clean and just in their own eyes.
- and they have said so too that in the Christian believers there dwells a *spirit* which is without guile, a pure, holy mind; and also that believers are not sinners in the sense that they, like unbelievers, the ungodly, *live* and *walk* in sin, or *serve* and *follow* it. But of anything to the effect that "the flesh" in them had become clean or that it had become completely cleaned out of them, of this we find no hint in the New Testament and still less in the Old Testament. On the contrary, Paul says: "The flesh lusteth

[i. e., has desires] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. v. 17). Yes, how the apostles viewed the matter can be seen best in I Cor. vi. II and in what precedes and follows. After the apostle has there set forth that neither idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God, he adds: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by [more correctly, in] the Spirit of our God." Hence: washed, sanctified, justified, - such he calls them; but in the meanwhile he rebukes them in one chapter after another for all kinds of sins which were prevalent among them; yea, so earnestly does he rebuke them that the first epistle to the Corinthians is the severest letter of rebuke that the apostle sent to any of the churches of God. From this it can be seen that the apostle did not think of any purity of "the flesh" when he called the Christians "washed," "sanctified," and "justified."

143. Now, this was the first thing we were to learn from the saints' confession of sins. The other lesson, the second thing, we are to learn from that is this: to wit, the fact that Christians must still be sensible of being sinners, such as "daily sin in many ways," — that fact is not evidence against a state of grace, or of sonship. To be a child of God and yet have sins, these are two things which are very easily harmonized as long as they are only matters to be talked about. But to be really conscious of being a sinner, and at the same time to believe in one's being in an immovable state of grace and sonship, that is infinitely difficult. For then the devil is always in the way and says: "Well; but indeed how can you think it reasonable that you should be a Christian, you who are so hard, dead, and ungodly! Why, you do not see other Christians' being such as you are! They, too, indeed complain of sins, but still it is altogether different with them. That they regard you as a Christian comes simply from the fact that they do not know what kind of a person you really are; for if they knew that they would right away think differently of you." Now, such a story by the devil seems to be altogether natural and reasonable, so that one is often at the point of giving up everything, and of beginning to despair. For how ever well instructed in the gospel we may be, the heart cannot entirely get rid of the opinion and feeling that sonship with God, and the state of grace, somehow are privileges only for such as are pious, and not for those who have real and grievous sins. And even if we get rid of the thought that the acts and gifts of grace are in their beginnings dependent on our works, yet will the heart stick fast in this that the continuance of grace and sonship depends on our piety; just as if God had said: "You may now become my child by grace and for naught, though you are a sinner; but how long I shall allow you to continue to be my child and to enjoy the privileges of a child of mine, that is to depend on your own piety."

r44. Now indeed we very well know, and frequently we talk of it to others, that it is characteristic of Christians to have a keen sense of sin; yes, as also Luther says, "The greater the saint the stronger the sense of sin." But as soon as it concerns ourselves, quickly we think that this consciousness, or feeling, of sin cannot consist in seeing and knowing oneself to be a real sinner, but that it must be a feeling and consciousness of piety, on account of which one feels soft and tender and warm of heart. If we then get to see and feel that we are real sinners, yea, that sin now and then even breaks out in words and deeds, then we become so startled and perplexed that we are almost immediately ready on this account to throw away grace and give up all as lost, just as if it surely would not do that those who are conscious of real sins should

be permitted to be children of God. Therefore it is an inestimable comfort to see in the word of God how they who had testimony from God himself, that they were his true and holy children, nevertheless have had still to acknowledge themselves to be sinners, and have had to allow themselves to be reproved by the word. For when we see such things, then we understand that God's kingdom of grace is such a kingdom that it permits poor, struggling, repentant sinners to belong in it; and this is a matter which all of God's children need to know and hear. Therefore, also, no one can calculate how many thousands of souls have been helped up, restored, comforted, and refreshed, and during long-continued darkness and mighty temptations have been supported just by means of the testimony of the Holy Scriptures concerning the sins and weaknesses of the saints. For in that testimony in those impartial accounts they have seen, as we have just said, how God's kingdom of grace has always been a kingdom for real sinners, such as they themselves have been; and this lesson from the word has kept them alive, so that they have not despaired. Yes, God who knows the weakness and need of the wretched [the poor, lowly, afflicted knows how such accounts and narratives as those of David's and Peter's fall have again and again helped them to faith and to peace, where otherwise the most glorious promises of grace have had no effect.

eyes strong saints, they never understand this matter, but think that it is a sickly, whining Christianity and an indulgent humoring of the flesh thus considerably to display and plead the sins of the saints for the consolation of Christians nowadays. And, to be sure, hypocrites can abuse these representations so as to seek in them or make of them a shield against the word which would convict them of their own hypocrisy and deceitfulness. But though *they* destroy themselves by these things, yet we must

set them forth for the sake of the tender and timid consciences of those souls that do not wish to sin, but nevertheless, in spite of all, notice how they sin daily in many ways, and therefore fear that they may be, or perhaps already may have been, cast out of the kingdom of God. Thus, also, God sees how the temporal and material gifts which he bestows are abused to the destruction of many; as, e. g., a great part of the grain which grows upon the earth is converted into destructive spirituous liquors, which bring incalculable and infinite misery upon individuals, families, and people. But yet, notwithstanding this abuse, he allows grain and other seed to grow; for though some even destroy themselves by the abuse of these substances, yet others need the same for bread in order to live. Oh! it is a glorious evangelical art to "know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Is. L. 4), and so to treat "the dimly burning wicks" [Is. xLii. 3, Rev. Ver., margin] that they may not altogether go out, or be quenched, but be kept aglow until at last they can begin to burn brightly and give light. Of this the Lord God must certainly have thought when he caused the sins of the saints to be related in the Holy Scriptures. Now then, this was the second thing which we were to learn from the saints' confessions of sins: namely, that Christ's kingdom [here this means the salvation through Christ together with the happiness and all privileges flowing from it] is open to sinners, and is composed of sinners; and that, therefore, it is only the murderer of souls, the devil, who on account of their sins desires to exclude the wretched [the poor, lowly, afflicted ones] from the kingdom of grace and glory, and to cause them to despair.

146. Now follows the second part of this verse, which shows how we ought to act when we in one way or another have sinned, and feel ourselves guilty: namely, that we then are not to use evasions or seek excuses, but acknowledge our guiltiness, and that at once, and go with

all to the mercy-seat, in order that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us. Here is, after all, no other course for us to take. To mend the matter is impossible, for that which is done is done. To seek excuses avails still less, for the Lord knows all, any way; and from excuses there never follows any real peace. To go on and wait until the first bitter feeling has subsided, before coming to the mercy-seat, — that is thoroughly ruinous, for it destroys all cordial and intimate standing and dealing with God. Therefore it is best at once to confess, sincerely and frankly to confess. Just as we know, also, that an earthly father desires above all that his children, when they have done any wrong, should sincerely and frankly confess how it is, while on the contrary it is always displeasing to him that they use evasions and try to excuse themselves. So, therefore, also the Lord says by the prophet: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God." (Jer. iii. 13). This too we always see as characteristic of the children of God, that they do not wish to be hidden from the Lord with their sins. Yes, even if it were possible that anything could be hidden from God, so that he should not see it, yet the children of God never could [because they never would] hide anything from him. They have now once for all obtained this disposition that they cannot be at peace, nor feel well, nor at all get along, if they may not tell God of all their evils and wrongs and troubles and miseries.

147. Therefore also the Holy Scriptures lay an especial stress upon the confession of sins. "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works [evil works, wrong-doings] are in the dark," says the Lord himself. (Is. xxix. 15). And David testifies that when he "kept silence" (that is, about his sins), then his "bones waxed old" through his daily moaning and crying. (See Ps. xxxii. 3—5). In the law

concerning the sacrifice of atonement it was ordained that the high priest should "lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins." (Lev. xvi. 21). Thus also David does here in our text and often elsewhere besides: He acknowledges his sins, confesses his transgressions unto the Lord, and craves for grace, for pardon. This too the Lord desires us to take as an example, so that we act in the same way as soon as we have sinned. The devil will indeed oppose our doing so, and will say: "Look here, how dare you now come to God again? Do you think that he shall stand ready to receive you every time you sin?" With such objections he wishes to frighten the sinner away from the mercy-seat and throne of grace. But when such objections rise up before you, then know that they come from the devil; for God desires you to come and confess, no matter however grievously and however often you may have sinned. Your case will certainly never become better by your keeping silent about your sin. "Well," you say, "if it were merely a sin of weakness! but I knew beforehand that it was sin, and still I did it." - Well, that was indeed dreadful, but what else will you now do than to confess it just as it is? Do you know any other way out of it? Have you any other one to go to, who can help you? "No," you say, "against God, against God only, have I sinned." Well, then, come now and reason with him about your sin. The judgment in the case is already written out, and reads thus: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Is. i. 18).

148. "Well," you say again, "if I only were such a one as could rightly confess!" This is quite a common objection, which at times is heard coming from some souls. For when they have no other good thing to come with, they at least wish to have a *confession* of such a

nature that in it there may be some piety and worthiness. To come empty and naked, — Oh, how unreasonable that is to the natural heart! Adam and Eve made for themselves aprons of fig leaves. (Gen. iii. 7). But beware of such aprons. Rightly to confess — that is to tell everything just as it is. Have you in word or in deed sinned, go to the Lord and say, "Lord Jesus, this and that I have said; I have spoken frivolously, untruthfully, etc.; that was a bad word"; or in another case, "This and that have I done, O Lord; thou seest that I have sinned; do forgive me my wrong-doing," etc. Do you feel your heart to be hard and cold? are you distracted, drowsy, and tardy in prayer or in hearing the word of God or in serving your fellow-men? — then tell it all to the Lord precisely as you know you would wish your own children to do to you if they had broken your commandments.

149. O that we might ever attain to a right, true simplicity! But so perverse are we by nature that that which is the very freest offer of grace we at once convert into a legal work, or irksome duty. For just think: What can be a greater grace than this that we are invited to come to the Lord with all our sin and wretchedness, to acknowledge and confess it all, and to be absolved from it all? But look now: at once we pervert this, and think that here it is a matter of a ceremonial religious service which we with certain solemn exercises and movements must perform, or go through, once or twice a day. From this follows, also, that often, if not always, it all becomes a burdensome and unpleasant task, and thus not at all a confession of sin, but, instead, merely "a solemn act," or "a devotional performance." But how is it possible that in this way there should be any peace or friendship or intimacy with God? Is it to be wondered at that our whole being and conduct thus become cramped, starved, and dull, without sap, vitality, and strength? Behold, for such a condition there is no other remedy than this that you open your eyes

over the word of God, so that you begin to consider the opportunity which you have for coming and confessing your sins, as a gracious and most favorable opportunity.

- 150. Such lessons we find also in several of the examples narrated in the Holy Scriptures. When the prodigal son said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son" (Luke xv.), - then you see in this a right and true confession of sin. To do so did not come upon the son as a commandment to perform "a solemn act," which he had to do if the father were to be gracious to him again; no, his need drove him home, ruined and ragged as he was, to confess his sins. Neither were there many and elegant and curious words, but with few and simple words he told out his sins and needs just as they were. When the publican in the temple smote upon his heart and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke xviii.), — then that was a right and true confession of sin, but not many and peculiar words; no, his conscience was oppresed on account of his sins, and that in turn pressed him on to make confession and to desire grace, in order that he might find peace. When the sinful woman lay weeping at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii.), - then was there a right and true confession of sin; there were no words, but only tears; her conscience was oppressed because she had lived in sin; now she needed grace, knew also that Jesus had grace to announce, therefore she came with all her sin to him, and laid herself down at his feet as if she wished to show him her sins and her desire for grace.
- 151. Likewise, when the sinful woman, whom the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus, lay there in her shame at his feet, with closed mouth, condemned to death by the law of Moses, then there were no words, perhaps no tears even, but she was accused of crime, and did

not say anything against that accusation, but lay there before the Lord Jesus, acknowledging her guiltiness in all, and then that was a right and true confession of sin. (John viii.). When the paralytic, who was through the roof of the house let down into the presence of Jesus, lay there in his bed, then he spoke no words, but he was burdened with his sins, and lay there powerless, and looked to the Lord Jesus, watching if he would have mercy upon him and forgive his sins. And then that was a right and true confession of sin. (Mark ii. 3-5). In short: A true confession of sin consists in this that you are open and honest before the Lord, letting sin be sin, and going with it all to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace. If you feel sorrowful, contrite, broken-hearted,— then, very well, that is good and is a work of God; but it does not make you worthy of grace. If, on the contrary, you feel your heart to be hard, stubborn, unyielding, - then alas! that is bad; but it does not make you unfit for grace, nor liable to be shut out from the throne of grace. Rather, the more wretched sinner you are the greater need you have of coming to the throne of grace, and of exhibiting your wretchedness before him with whom "there is forgiveness," and who "will abundantly pardon." (Ps. cxxx. 4; Is. Lv. 7). Yes, come and exhibit it. Jesus receives sinners, - that testimony he has won both from friends and from foes, and he himself says: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37).

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

"Pardon mine iniquity."

II.

152. Luther says that "the article concerning the forgiveness of sins is the article which makes us true Christians and gives us eternal life." "Therefore," he adds, "it is necessary that this article be treated and discussed in Christendom with all diligence and without ceasing, in order that the people may learn clearly and correctly to understand it. For this matter is the only, the highest, and the most difficult art of Christians, concerning and in which they have enough to learn as long as they live, so that no one needs to learn anything new or higher or better" [that is, for salvation]. And again he says: "It is indeed quickly enough heard, read, and repeated after others, so far as the words are concerned." — to wit, this matter about the forgiveness of sins, — "but to realize it and bring it into practice, so that it lives in us, and so that the conscience can confidently build and venture upon it, that is not the art of man. Therefore, I pray and exhort those who wish to be and remain Christians always to be occupied with, and meditate on, this article; yea, so to chew, ruminate, and absorb the same, that they at last may get a real good taste of it and a relish for it, and thus, as James says, become 'a beginning,' or 'a kind of firstfruits, of God's creatures.' (James i. 18).

For that we should come so far that we had attained to a full and perfect understanding of it, that is something which will not happen in this life, as even the dear apostles themselves, who, for all that, were full of the Holy Spirit and faith, never got any farther in their practical knowledge, or experience, than into this article of the forgiveness of sins." — So far Luther; and how truly has he not spoken in these wosds! Whatever besides we may learn or do, that may be good, and necessary, and by God commanded; but we become and remain *Christians* by no other doctrine or work than by this one doctrine and work of God alone, namely, this single one which is called the forgiveness of sins.

- 153. But if it is so that we only through this article of the forgiveness of sins become and remain Christians, then it ought indeed to be of unspeakable importance to us rightly to see what the word of God teaches concerning the forgiveness of sins, in order both that we for our own part may know and also that we may have something certain to say to those who would become Christians.
- 154. In the first place we notice then that the forgiveness of sins is not the same as the disposition of the heart, or of the mind, of God towards the world. That God loves the world, that love and that fact certainly constitute the primary and back-of-all-lying ground for the forgiveness of sins; but that act or fact is not the same as the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptures indeed say that God loves the whole world, that is, all men, all mankind; but they nowhere say that all men have the forgiveness of sins. The Lord Jesus has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, our sins"; but he never taught us to pray, "Lord, do love us." No. He has declared that God loves the world, and on that ground has taught us individually to pray for the forgiveness of sins. Hence: that God loves the world, — that is not the same as the forgiveness of sins.

155. In the second place: That God has sent his only begotten Son into the world to be its Saviour (cf. 1 John iv. 9, 10, 14), and that he caused him to taste death for us all (cf. Heb. ii. 9). that is not the same as the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptures testify that it is by, or through, Jesus that God forgives sins, and that it is by, or through, the blood of Jesus that we are cleansed from sins; but from this it is evident that the sending, or delivering up, of the Son is not the same as the forgiveness of sins. The Scriptures testify also that he has been delivered up for us all, but they nowhere say that all have the forgiveness of sins; they also represent the forgiveness of sins as something continually recurring and often repeated, but they do not thus represent the sending and delivering up of Christ; they teach us daily to pray that God would forgive us our sins, but they never teach us to pray that God would daily send and deliver up Christ, for this has taken place once for all, and therefore cannot be an object of prayer, but only of announcement and proclamation, of thanksgiving and praise. The Scriptures say further that if we do not forgive our neighbor his sins, then neither will God forgive us our sins; but they never say anything like that concerning the sending of Christ or the giving of his life. Consequently: the sending of Christ, comprising his being "delivered up for us all," his selfsacrifice, and all his work for the salvation of sinners, that act, even that gracious act, is not the same as the forgiveness of sins.

156. "Well; but," you say, "the forgiveness of sins is twofold: namely, the first kind, a general one, — one that has been gained and purchased by Christ, and then given to the whole world; and, the second kind, an individual, or a special, one, — an applied one, one which the individual receives by believing in the general forgiveness of sins." Answer: In the Scriptures can be found no passage which says that the forgiveness of sins

is twofold; no passage which intimates that they, the Scriptures, speak of the forgiveness of sins in two different senses; neither do the Scriptures anywhere say which passage is to be understood as speaking of the forgiveness of sins in the one sense, and which passage is to be understood as speaking of the forgiveness of sins in the other sense. But if such things are not found thus spoken of in the Scriptures, then let us leave them.* Such expressions as an "acquired," or a "purchased," and an "applied" forgiveness of sins are utterly foreign to the word of

^{*} In English and American religious speech and literature. as the English language has a great variety of words that have been taken from all possible quarters, there are used different words and phrases as names, or terms, to designate these alleged two kinds of forgiveness of sins. The most common terms for the first kind are pardon and amnesty,— to both of which the qualifying word general is usually prefixed. By "a general pardon," or "a general amnesty," is then meant the supposed fact that God has remitted, in favor of the whole world, i. e., all men. the penalty (punishment) due to sin; or, in other words, that God has forever released all mankind from all consequences of all sins, — this on account of, as supposed, a full satisfaction of all the violated demands of the law of God having been rendered by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who (as again supposed) took the place of the whole guilty mass of mankind in that work of satisfying divine justice. Forgivenesspersonal, or individual, forgiveness of sin — is then, in this view of a sharp distinction between pardon and forgiveness, supposed to be God's putting away all remembrance of a sinner's personal offense against him; or, his removing from his heart all feelings and thoughts of that personal offense of sin, together with his communicating that (supposed) fact to the sinner, so that the sinner is thus restored and received back into a filial relation to God. — It hardly needs to be pointed out that these theological hair-splitting distinctions have no ground, or warrant, in the Bible, the word of God; least of all is there any such for that extravaganza-idea of "a general pardon," or "a general am nesty," which just makes grace run riot. That must in all candor be considered as a set of false conclusions from a set of more or less false premises. The Bible knows and constantly speaks of sin, all sin, - unbelief being accounted as much sin as any other, -

God.* And if neither the prophets nor Christ nor the apostles of Christ had any need of using such expressions for the bringing of sinners to faith and salvation, then it is undoubtedly safest for us to abide, with the whole matter, by what the Scriptures say. Never do the Scriptures anywhere teach us to pray thus: "O Lord, apply, or communicate, to me the forgiveness of sins that has been acquired, or purchased, by Christ once for all." Neither do we ever thus pray; but we do say, "Forgive us our sins," — and thus the Scriptures teach us to say. It is in this matter as in many others. Where human theology has

as yet liable to be punished, both here and hereafter, severely punished, and that just in the individual who sins, unless it be really and individually forgiven, blotted out, cleansed, and put away from the sinner by the means which God through his grace has provided. Indeed the world, mankind, is not released from the consequences of sin, past, present, or future, as both the Bible and experience testify. It is sad that men should be deceived by such false theology as that mentioned above concerning "a general pardon", — no matter how well meant it may be even by earnest Christian teachers. No; God's method of dealing with sin in pardoning it, forgiving it, blotting it out, is vastly more real, honest, and righteous than man thus makes it, and the work of Christ also is more real and glorious, redounding most highly to the eternal praise of God. — J. G. P.

^{*} These expressions, here translated quite literally into English, abound in Scandinavian and German religious literature. Sometimes the terms "objective forgiveness" and "subjective forgiveness" are used in the same sense, as are also in fact the terms "objective atonement" and "subjective atonement." The corresponding English-American expressions are: for the one, "a general pardon," "a general, or universal, amnesty," sometimes "the purchased pardon," "the paid debt," "the satisfied claims of justice," etc; for the other "individual pardon," "personal forgiveness," "the payment receipted and accepted," "pardon communicated and received," etc. More on these terms and the subjects of which they are used is said in another book by the Author (P. W.), entitled "The Reconciliation," etc., in § 109 and the notes found there, also in §§ 32, 44, 45, and 89, and notes. — J. G. P.

turned our heads awry, there the Holy Spirit nevertheless guides our hearts aright in experience, so that we pray aright, and in heart believe aright, while in the head we think and speculate amiss, foolishly, absurdly.

157. Behold here a picture. When the children of Israel were afflicted with the fiery serpents in the wilderness, God caused Moses to set up a brazen serpent for the healing of all who were bitten by the serpents. (Num. xxi. 4-9). That brazen serpent was, so to say, a healer; and it was the word and announcement of God that every one who looked upon that serpent should be healed. And according to that word it happened. But surely the setting up of the brazen serpent was not the same thing as the healing of those bitten by the fiery serpents. Neither could there be any talk of "a general healing" and "an applied healing" [or, on the one hand, "an objective, or provided, healing," and, on the other hand, "a subjective, communicated, or received, healing"]. Neither did Moses say to the people: "In this serpent God has healed all; in this serpent you are, therefore, all of you, in the eyes of God, once for all healed; here is a general healing, which lies waiting for your acceptance; therefore believe in this general healing, and it will be applied also to you, so that you too will be healed." No; Moses set up the brazen serpent at the command of God, then he must have pointed to it and said: "Look upon this." And every one who looked upon it lived. Just think how plain and simple. There was no need of long and complicated explanations, conclusions, or discussions. No. "Look on the brazen serpent," — that was the announcement, short and simple so that even the ignorant and stupid understood it without any explanation; and when they looked, they were healed, and lived. But if there were any one who did not look on the brazen serpent, then he died; and of such a one it could not have been said: "Why, he too was healed in the brazen serpent, but it did not benefit him, because he did not believe that he was healed; for as he did not believe that, he did not get the healing 'applied' [or, communicated] to himself!" No, not so; such speaking is entirely foreign and unknown to the language of the Holy Scriptures. But thus it would have been said: "Poor man, here he lies dead now; and yet the brazen serpent was uplifted also for *his* healing. Oh, that he had looked upon it!"

158. Now, this is just the picture which the Lord Jesus himself uses. (See John iii. 14, 15). For in the same way the case stands as to the forgiveness of sins, or justification in Christ. God had compassion on the world, and gave his only begotten Son for the justification of all sinners. And this was his word and announcement, that every one who would believe in the Son should have the forgiveness of sins in his name. Thus also, as we can see, the apostles have preached. "Yes," you say, "but can it not then in a certain sense be said that the forgiveness of sins is in Christ given by God to all men?" Well, if by such an expression it be meant that God delivered up Christ for the whole world unto justification, then indeed the expression may be used, if the wish thus to use it be so extremely uncontrollable. But just think how much better it is at once to say precisely what one means. For then all understand what is said, and one does not need to use all those long and complicated explanations that otherwise are necessary, — that is, necessary when one is saying something else than what one really is meaning. Surely the matter is not made more evangelical, or more full of gospel joy and comfort, by one's expressing it differently from what one means. If some were to say that God had given health in the brazen serpent to all those who had been bitten by the fiery serpents, so that all had health in that serpent before and without any their believing and looking, why, then that would indeed be strange and queer talk; and just think how it

would have sounded if some had preached thus to the people that were bitten by the serpents! But if such expressions were intended to mean that God had caused the brazen serpent to be set up for the healing of all, so that, whether they looked upon it or not, it was still placed there and was still hanging there for the healing of all if they only would look upon it, then certainly that would be rightly meant. But if one means the right thing, then surely it can be no harm also to say, right from the beginning, just exactly as and what one means. - May God more and more give us the disposition and the heart to let go all human thoughts and notions as to things divine, and simply to cling to the words of the Holy Scriptures. For they are eternal rocks, truly fit to build on. True godliness, true simplicity, and true evangelicalness do not consist in speaking, or saying things otherwise than the Scriptures do.

159. Well then, this was the second thing we were to notice: to wit, that the forgiveness of sins is not the same as God's sending and delivering up of Christ. Now, in the third place, we are to mark that the forgiveness of sins is not a thing, or a treasure, which God has deposited in Christ, --or however it now may be thought of and represented. It does really often happen that souls imagine. or represent to themselves and others, the forgiveness of sins as a kind of material thing that is already provided and prepared, and is lying ready somewhere in Christ or in the heart of God or in the word - really they do not know where -, thus lying ready as a treasure for us, for all sinners, to lay hold of and receive by faith. But of anything such the Scriptures are accustomed never to speak; on the contrary they preach the person Jesus Christ as by God given and appointed to the office of forgiving sins. Therefore, also, the Scriptures present this person Jesus before the eyes of sinners, describe to them his person, his office, and his work, tell them how he

came from God to give repentance and forgiveness of sins, and therefore point all sinners to him if they desire to obtain the forgiveness of their sins. As if they would say: "Do you desire the forgiveness of your sins, then turn to this Jesus; he is the right man, trust him; for God has given to him the office of forgiving sins." This is called preaching the remission of sins. (See Luke xxiv. 47). Thus the Lord says: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." (Matt. xi. 28). And Paul says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31). And just think what a living and simple thing it is, and how enlivening and easily comprehended it must be, thus to point - not to "a forgiveness which is lying somewhere and awaiting to be received," but - to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29), to Jesus, the man from Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God, who from God has received authority and office to forgive sins, and who therefore waits for, yea, not only waits for, but goes about and seeks sinners. And still more: think not only of how simple and plain and enlivening this is, but also how safe and good it is, to know that thus it is written. As the Lord says: "I have blotted out [or, rather more correctly as a continual present, as the Swedish and German Versions have it: "I blot out"], as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" [or, "I redeem thee" or, "I will redeem thee"]. (Is. xLiv. 22).

160. Hence, this was the third thing we were to mark: that, namely, the forgiveness of sins is not some kind of an enshrined thing — so to speak — or a treasure that is lying somewhere awaiting to be found or taken by sinners; but what is said and supposed to be "the forgiveness of sins which God has given to the world," that forgiveness consists in this that God has given the only begotten Son to the whole world with authority and office to

forgive sins. As Peter says: "Him [Jesus] hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts v. 31). Wherever now any one believes in the Son, there that one has forgiveness of sins in him, or through his name. If God had given a spring, or a fountain, for the healing of a certain kind of disease, and any one visited that spring, and by means of it became well, then it could be said, "In that spring he found health", - not as though health were a thing that lay there already prepared and finished down in the spring; but the spring was a healing fountain, and therefore he found health, or was healed, when he drank of its waters. In like manner, also, Jesus is the healing fountain of Zion, open for the whole world, affording healing from all sins. (See Zech. xiii. 1). Whenever any drink of its waters, that is, believe on the person Jesus, then they find in it health and life, that is, forgiveness of sins and everlasting blessedness.

161. But having now seen that the forgiveness of sins is not the same as the love of God, neither the same as God's sending and delivering up of Christ, neither any acquired, prepared, or ready-made thing, like an enshrined article, or treasure, then it is now proper to ask: What then is the forgiveness of sins? And to that question we give this answer: The forgiveness of sins is a work, or an act, of God, by which he gives up, or cast away, all thoughts of and claims on account of a person's sins, or wrong-doings, hence also remits, or takes away, all penalties (punishments) due to the sins committed, so that he no longer imputes, charges, or takes into account, the sins and transgressions thus forgiven [or pardoned, which is really only another word for the same thing*]. Pre-

^{*} Dictionaries, while defining in general the two words as having the same sense, especially in the Bible (the Old Testament, "pardon" is not used at all in the New) and in religious matters generally, — the word forgive being Anglo-Saxon, pardon being

cisely as when a father forgives his child its sin: for this means nothing else than that he gives up all thought of its sin, and does not any more take it into account or even consider it, but will let all be forgotten, and will henceforth not deal with the child according to its demerit. When the Scriptures speak of such things they speak of them in a human way, directing us into our own houses and families for explanations and illustrations. For wherever you see a good father or mother in a home, there you have the true and proper theological seminary, which will teach you more and better about the forgiveness of sins than all universities and other schools can do. For as you see a father or mother having compassion upon their children, forgiving them their sins, etc., so then do know that things go on in the same way in the household of God, only with this difference that in the household of God it goes on a great deal more gloriously and thoroughly in the matter of the forgiveness of sins. For it is simply impossible for a human being, even though that being be a Latin through the Norman-French -- , make only this distinction: "Forgive points to inward feeling, and supposes alienated affection. Pardon looks more to outward things or consequences, and is often applied to trifling matters." (See Webster's Unab. Dict., sub Forgiveness). Really, therefore, in God's dealing with sin and sinners "forgiveness" precedes "pardon"; that is, he "gives up" his thoughts and remembrance of a sinner's sins before he remits, or stays and takes away, their consequences (penalties, punishments). Human government can only pardon sins, or crimes (that is, the grosser, more outward forms of sins); but God goes deeper and farther: he does, and must from the moral nature of the case, first remove the sinning disposition in the sinner and hence drop his own feelings of dislike on account of the sin, then in consequence thereof the penalty is naturally and justly removed, and this all in order that his pardoning as well as his forgiving acts may be real, righteous, effectual, truly helpful, and thus saving. In a great deal of English-American religious teaching the facts expressed by the distinctions made between "forgiveness" and "pardon" are sadly and monstrously reversed. -J. G. P.

mother, to forgive sins as thoroughly as does our dear Lord God.

162. In order that we now may be assured of this we will out of the Holy Scriptures bring forth some testimonies concerning the forgiveness of sins. Thus says the word of God: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness [grace] and truth, keeping mercy [grace] for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7). "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." (Ps. ciii. 2, 3). "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to [literally, "speak ye to the heart of"] Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." (Is. XL. 1, 2). "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save [Revised Version has it better: he is "a mighty one who will save", he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."* (Zeph. iii. 17). "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame; when I have forgiven thee all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD." (Ezek. xvi. 63, Revised Version). "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." (Luke v. 20).

163. This forgiving of sins is represented and described in the Scriptures: 1st, as a non-imputing of sins [that is, as not charging, or not reckoning, sins; or, not

^{*} Luther in his German Version, followed by the Old Swedish, apprehends the meaning of the Hebraistic phrase, "rest in his love" (literally, "be silent in his love"), to be, "in his love, or, for the sake of his love, he will be silent as to your sin," so that the German and the Old Swedish translate, "he will forgive you." Hence the reason for the Author's (P. W.'s) quoting this passage in connection with the subject of the forgiveness of sins. — J. G. P.

taking them in consideration], according to the word of David, "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. xxxii. 2; cf. Rom. iv. 6-8); andly, as a forgetting of sins, according to the word of the Lord, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. xxxi. 34); — 3rdly, as a subduing [or, treading down] and casting away of sins, according to the word of the prophet Micah, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities [better in the Revised Version: "he will tread our iniquities under foot"; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. vii. 19); — 4thly, as a taking away [or, a putting away, or removing] of sins, according to the word of Nathan to David, "The LORD also hath put away thy sin" (2 Sam. xii. 13), and the word of the angel to the high priest Joshua, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee" [or, "I have put away thine iniquity from thee," the Hebrew word being the same as in the passage just quoted above] (Zech. iii. 4); — 5thly, as a blotting out of sins, according to the word of the Lord, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Is. XLiii. 24, 25), and, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Is. XLiv. 22), and the word of Peter, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts iii. 19); — 6thly, as a cleansing from sins, according to the word of the Lord, "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me" (Jer. xxxiii. 8), and the word of the apostle, "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin" (I John i. 7). By these many expressions for the same thing the Lord without doubt desires to imprint deeply into our hearts this fact that the forgiveness of sins is so sure and real a removing, or undoing, of sins, that they shall never any further at all be remembered, or thought of, by God.

164. Finally, the Scriptures represent the forgiveness of sins, also, 7thly, as a justifying of the sinner. Thus Paul says in Rom. ivth: "David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." But if we ask where the imputing of righteousness is spoken of by David, then Paul answers: Why, in the psalm (xxxii.) where it is said: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." [The words are quoted as they read in Rom. iv. 7, 8, where they vary slightly from the exact verbality in the psalm, caused no doubt by the apostle's quoting from memory of the Greek Old Testament translation]. There you see that Paul by the forgiveness of sins and the imputing of righteousness means one and the same thing. Just as it is altogether one and the same thing if I say, "heal the disease," or if I say, "restore health." These are not two different, or separate, things; neither two sides of the same thing; but only two different, or separate, expressions for the same thing. For the restoration of health consists just in this that the disease is taken away, just as the restoration of righteousness consists in this that sin is taken away through forgiveness.

165. Therefore also Luther says in his sermon on the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, § 17: "This doctrine (concerning the forgiveness of sins) ought indeed to be well apprehended, so that we take it as a matter thoroughly fixed and determined, that our piety, or righteousness, before God is called the forgiveness of sins." And again, in § 21: "Christian righteousness is nothing else that can be thought of, or named, than the forgiveness of sins." And again: "Besides the external piety (or righteousness)

there exists another piety (or righteousness), one which does not belong to, nor is of, this temporal life here on earth, but one which alone is of any worth in the sight of God and avails in his presence goes high and far above all that is upon the earth, and has nothing to do with any works. Now that is the righteousness which we call the grace of God, or the forgiveness of sins." (§§ 11, 12). Of this it is said also in one of our [Lutheran] Symbolical Books: "To receive and possess the forgiveness of sins, that is to be righteous and pious before God, as Ps. xxxii. declares, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.'" (The Apology of the Augsburg Confession: Article on Justification, from the German text). In the same Symbolical Book there are cited also these words of Augustine as being in harmony with the Scriptures: "All the commandments are fulfilled when that which is not done is forgiven." If my sins are forgiven, then I stand clean, righteous, and pious before God and all his commandments. Well, what more do we need than Rom. ivth, where Paul in clear and plain words says that he by imputed righteousness means the forgiveness of sins? Such testimony must any way be decisive.

this David says here in our text: "For thy name's sake, O LORD." Also in Is. xLiii. 25 it is said, as we heard a little while ago above: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transpressions for mine own sake." There we have it: "I, I, — for mine own sake." It is on this point John says that "he (the Lord God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" [literally, "he is faithful and righteous so that he forgives us the sins"]. (I John i. 9). Hence, he forgives sins for the sake of his own faithfulness and righteousness. The Lord does all things for his own sake. He is now once for all such a God, with such a nature and such disposition, that he forgives sins. All our salvation, and all that belongs to it, all has proceeded and all pro-

ceeds from God, from out of his fatherly heart, as Paul says in 2 Cor. v: "All things are of God" (verse 18). It is he who has begun everything, and that for his name's sake, that is, because he is called and is our Father and Redeemer. To all questions about the motives on God's side no other answer can be given than this, "For his name's sake," that is to say, because he is the one he is, and is called as he is called. If you see a father having compassion on his child, living and working for it, yea, watching, weeping, and rejoicing over it, just ask him something like this: "My dear sir, why do you do so? Can you not tear yourself away? Why do you sacrifice life and possessions for that child? There are many others who might better deserve or need your helping them," etc. And he will answer: "What do you say? Tear myself away?! You ask, 'why?' Do you not know that I am the father of that child? Those others,—yes, they may possibly be worthier or more needy than my child, but their father I am not," etc. If you think of this you will somewhat understand what those words mean, "For my sake" -"for my name's sake."

167. When any one has sinned against another, then it lies in our nature at once to think that that other one has also become differently disposed to the offending one, to the one who sinned, than he was before. Such change of thought and feeling we therefore naturally attribute even to our Lord God. We can see how this was the case immediately after the fall, when Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of God. (Gen. iii. 8). For since *they* had sinned, they at once thought that *he* had something evil or terrible in his mind against them. Hence come also these states of thoughts and feelings, namely, that we are shy of him, and think only of how we may hide ourselves from him, or how it may be possible for us to appease him, or how we may find some one who will help us against him. Thus, just for these

reasons, the papists have betaken themselves to the Virgin Mary and other dead saints as their refuge, in order to find in or with them a help against him. That God should for his own sake — for his own name's sake — exercise mercy, that is something which does so far transcend all our thoughts, that when God finally makes known the riches of his infinite grace, and for our salvation sends his only begotten Son, then we think: "Oh, that was well! He is just the man. Not the Virgin Mary, nor any other saint, neither our own works; nay, Christ, he is just the man to help us against God; behind him we may hide ourselves from God." And even if we do not speak out our thoughts so coarsely as that, still that is the sum and substance of the thoughts of our hearts. And that in spite of all that the Lord reiterates in his word, saying: "For my own sake," "for my name's sake."

168. May God graciously help us out of such darkness. Just think what folly it is to be using as a help against God the help which God himself has sent us in order that he might redeem us out of sin and death, help us again to life and righteousness, and thus help us home to himself again! It is precisely as if a father sent his runaway and needy son money so that that son might be able to get home again, but the son sent the money back to the father in order with it to appease his wrath and buy his favor. Think how that would pain the father's heart! But such are our natural thoughts as to our dealings with God: if we do not have anything or any one to use as a shield against God, then we feel unhappy and as though we had lost all sure ground for our faith, our hearts, and our consciences. That the Lord says, "I - I - for my own sake," — we see well enough that that is written; but - Oh! how fitting the words of the prophet are just here, — "Who hath believed our report?" [Or, "Who hath believed that which we have heard?" — in this case: that which we hear, or see, from the Lord himself! Is. Liii. 1]. May God graciously deliver our souls out of darkness and our minds from error.

160. Behold, now, this is the true rock to stand upon: the name of our God. As Solomon says, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." (Prov. xviii. 10). If the kingdom of God be likened to a house, the foundation of which is Christ, then the name of our God is the safe and solid ground, or bottom, on which the foundation rests, and with the foundation also the whole house. For in this all the Holy Scriptures are concordant and unanimous: to wit, in ascribing all our salvation to God and in referring it all to him as its only source, as the one from whom Christ proceeded and was sent, in order, on his behalf, to save the world. And of those who have spoken in the Scriptures there is none who has so ceaselessly and emphatically asserted this as just the Lord Jesus Christ himself

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

"Pardon mine iniquity."

III.

170. After having in the preceding Meditation briefly seen what the forgiveness of sins is, we will now more closely observe through, or by, whom it is that God forgives sins, who they are that have the forgiveness of sins, and what God desires of us as thanks for his forgiving sins, great transgressions and iniquities, without money and for naught.

171. As to the first point, — or concerning this, through, or by, whom it is that God forgives sins, — the Lord himself answers: "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (Matt. ix. 6). Therefore also Paul says to the Christians in Colosse that Christ had forgiven them their sins (Col. iii. 13); and to the Christians in Ephesus he says that God in Christ had forgiven them. (Eph. iv. 32*). This fact and matter the Lord Jesus himself expresses thus: "Thou [Father] hast given him [me,

^{*} The Authorized Version translates this passage in a way that has led to, or at least has been made to support, a great deal of false theology; it makes the passage read thus: "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This would be in direct contradiction of such explicit declarations as are made in Is. xLiii. 25. Ezek. xxxvi. 21, 22, and others. Says Prof. M. B. Riddle: "Never was the English Version more unfortunate in its rendering of the phrase "en Christo." The passage should be

thy Son] power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." (John xvii. 2). And before he had said: "As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." (John v. 21-23). All that belongs to the work and office of saving the world, that the Father has delivered to the Son; and to that work and office most surely belongs also the forgiving of sins. In general the Scriptures represent the Lord Jesus Christ as the one through, or by, whom the Father does all that he does. When he creates the world, he does that through the Son; when he sustains and provides for the world, he does that through the Son; when he saves the world, he does that through the Son: when he judges the world, he does that through the Son.

to the Scriptures which bear on this subject, we will here cite only those that are found in the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians. There Paul says that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in, or through, Christ (verse 3), — that God has chosen us in Christ [that is, as being in union with Christ] (verse 4), — that God has foreordained us unto adoption as sons by, or through, Jesus Christ (verse 5), — that God has made us accepted [that is, lovable, or favored ones; but the better rendering is that of the Revised Version: "he freely bestowed grace on us"] in him, the Beloved, or through him (verse 6), — that we have

translated as the Revised Version has it: "Even as God also in Christ forgave you." That is, when the apostle's readers had by faith turned to Christ in order to obtain forgiveness of their sins, and Christ according to his word—"for his name's sake" (1 John ii. 12), for his being the one, the Christ, he has revealed himself to be—had forgiven them their sins, then it was really God who forgave them, God acting in union with Christ, having given him power, or authority, to forgive sins.—J. G. P.

redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in him, or through him [as the personal medium, or agent] (verse 7), — that we in, or through, Christ have obtained an inheritance [rather, "were made his inheritance," that is, God's lot, possession, his elect ones] (verse 11), — that we in Christ are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (verse 13). It all is of God through Jesus Christ. If any one in reading the New Testament, especially the epistles of the apostles, will mark all the passages containing the expression, or will underline that expression, "through Christ," or "in Christ," [and the one equivalent to it, as "through him," "in him," etc.], he will surely be benefited by so doing. For these little words are easily passed by; and then, too, the devil is desirous to close our eyes to them, so that we shall not see how all the Scriptures attract us to this Son in order that we in him and through him and no one else may find the forgiveness of sins.

173. "Therefore," says Luther, "it is necessary that we learn rightly to find this treasure, and to seek forgiveness where it ought to be sought; that is, that we learn well to know, embrace, and hold fast to the Lord Jesus. For it is decreed that no one without, or apart from, Christ shall come into the presence of God or find grace and receive forgiveness." And again: "Hence, we have indeed pure grace and forgiveness for all our sins, yet nowhere else than in and through this one single person, Jesus Christ; there, in and by him only, must such things be sought and obtained." These words of Luther also fully agree with Hebrews iv. 16 where it is said: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," or, more literally, "grace for timely help," that is, "grace to help us at the right time." In short: Christ is the man to whom the Father directs all that desire the forgiveness of sins; him he has appointed to that special work and office of forgiving sins; him he has "set forth

to be a mercy-seat through faith in his blood" [thus Rom. iii. 25 most correctly rendered]; without and apart from him there is no help, or salvation, to be found. Just as in the wilderness God would only through, or by means of, the brazen serpent deal with those who had been bitten by serpents, so that no one could be healed except through the brazen serpent, and yet he did not heal them for the sake of the brazen serpent, but for his own name's sake through, or by means of, the brazen serpent, — thus, also, has God given and delivered up this Son, in order that he, this Son, should by and in his own blood wash us and cleanse us from all sins; therefore, also, no one shall or can except in and through him have the forgiveness of sins or anything else belonging to salvation. He alone is the Saviour; only in his blood is there salvation. Such is the eternal counsel of God, such is his eternal plan. It is all of God and of none other; for his name's sake and for nothing else. It is all by and through and in Christ and none other; by and through and in his blood and nothing else. Him and no one else has God set forth as a mercy-seat for sinners, and "in his blood" it is that he has set him forth as such a mercy-seat. (Rom. iii. 25). Therefore it is said that we "through his blood have the forgiveness of sins." (Eph. i. 7). Whether I understand more or less of it, whether I accept it or oppose it, that cannot change the fact, or the matter, itself; for thus it is written: "In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." [Acts iv. 12, according to the Revised Version as being here rather clearer and stronger than the Authorized]. Mark, "in none other," "no other name given"; - but that name, the name of Jesus, that is given, and God is the one who gave it, and gave it for his own name's sake. For he so loved the world.

174. From this we now understand who they are that have the forgiveness of sins, or, in other words, who

they are to whom God does not impute, or reckon, or charge, sin. For that these are not all men, all mankind, that is a fact to which all the Scriptures bear witness. The Scriptures say, "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. xxxii. 2); but "blessed" they do not pronounce the world to be. On the contrary, it is in them declared that "the whole world lieth in wickedness," or, more correctly, "in the evil one" (1 John v. 19), that is, in the power, or under the dominion, of the devil; further, that it is under a curse, or under condemnation, and that the wrath of God abides upon it (cf. John iii. 18, 19, 36; Eph. ii. 2, 3); also, that finally it shall perish in everlasting destruction (see Rom. i. 18; ii. 5—9; I Cor. xi. 32; I John ii. 17). Such is not blessedness. But as the world remains in its sins it cannot go otherwise with it. If worldly people think that such preaching is hard and not exactly evangelical, then we have no other answer to give them than this: "Thus, however, God has spoken in his word; and we have no right, or authority, to preach any other gospel." No; it is certainly the true gospel, and it is truly evangelical, to preach just as God has preached and not otherwise.

175. But who then are they that have the forgiveness of sins? To this we have—God be eternally praised!— clear and explicit and definite answers in the word of God. Thus says David: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Ps. xxxii. 3—5). And in Isaiah (i. 18) the Lord says: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And in Jeremiah

(iii. 22) the Lord says: "Return, ye backsliding [or, apostate, treacherous, faithless] children, and I will heal your backslidings" [or, apostasies, treacheries, faithlessness; cf. verses 13, 14, and 20]. And Peter says: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43). And Paul says: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xiii. 38, 39). And again he says: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted [reckoned] for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5). And John says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just [righteous] to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9).

176. Are not these indeed clear words? And how can it really be possible to think that God should have left us without an explicit and definite answer to the very highest and most vital question pertaining to our being? For if I do not know how I may attain to grace and the forgiveness of sins, then it matters very little whether I know anything else or not. But now I know it, for God has spoken about it. And then I see in these words, as one of the very first things which they teach, that God pushes aside everything that is, or may be, called work or law. "Ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," it was said, as we just heard. "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," says Paul again (in Gal. ii. 16). And again: "If it is by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6, Revised Version). Therefore: Let alone the law and all that the law requires! That is the first thing you need to do. Let go everything that is called works! For whatever work you undertake, you will never any way by it attain to righteousness, and God does not desire any works of you. You know and feel your heart to be hard and dead: you know and feel how sin rages in your whole being; yea, you see and feel that you are the slave of sin. Now, all this wrong you think you ought to amend and remedy before you can obtain the forgiveness of sin! Thousands of souls have thought so, too; but what they have reaped from their thinking so and attempting it, that has been torments, needless torments. Therefore, just as, when you see any one sick and in pains and torments from having eaten something which caused those troubles, you then think, "Lo! I will take care, lest I eat of that and die";-so now let the disastrous examples of all those who through works have attempted to become righteous, let their examples of failure, we say, deter you from the like attempts, so that you say: "That way I will take care not to go; for it causes misery and pain, and after all does not lead home." Therefore: Let go all works, and never think of your making amends, or of your rectifying what is wrong in or about you. To make amends and to rectify, that you cannot do, and that you need not do. No; the Lord says: "Let go!"

177. "Yes; but," you say, "what then shall I do?" Answer; First stop and look at what you have already done. What is the character of that? Sinful; yes, your life has hitherto been one of sins and transgressions. Hence, this then is your case and condition: Guilty; yes, guilty in everything. How will you now act? What course will you now take? "Yes," you say, "and that is just the question. Who is he that now has a good advice to give me?" Answer: The Lord — he is the one who gives you an advice which runs thus [to quote Is. i. 18 in effect*]:

^{*} The Swedish Versions, like the German of Luther, translate the Hebrew word for "reason together" by words meaning "go to trial," which is just as correct and here more suitable to the context, throughout which law terms are used, and especial-

"Come now, and let us reason together, - let us argue the matter, let it come to a clear understanding between us, let us submit the case to a judicial trial." — "What?" you say. "Contend, argue, go to trial, with God, you say? That sounds terrible to one who knows that he is guilty." But wait a little. It is not a perilous trial, one at which you run a risk, for it winds up with this final judgment: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." There you have it. Go and tell the Lord your trouble and wretchedness. O how simple a way! Nothing for you to amend, or remedy, nothing for you to do, nothing for you to make better, but only to tell the Lord everything just as it is. For the same moment in which you thus tell all (that is, confess your sins) to the Lord, in that same moment one of the following things will happen: either your sins will be forgiven, or it will be proved that it is no longer true that the Lord God is faithful and righteous, or that the blood of Jesus has been shed for the remission of sins, or that Jesus has risen from the dead. Because, to deny that one who confesses his sins has the forgiveness of sins, that is to deny the righteousness of God, the death of Christ for our sins, and his rising again for our justification. And from such denial may God preserve us. This thing, this matter of forgiveness accompanying confession, — this fact, why, it stands like a mountain of God. As David says: "Thy righteousness, O LORD, is like the great mountains" [or, literally, as the Revised Version has it, "like the mountains of God;" according to the Old Swedish and the German: "Thy righteousness stands like the mountains of God"];

ly magistrates, or rulers, are addressed (see, e. g., verses 10 and 1i). The same Heb. word as is used here, meaning to contend, dispute, argue, plead, etc., occurs also in Gen. xxxi. 37 ("judge"), Job xvi. 21 ("plead"), xxiii. 7 ("dispute"), Mic. vi. 2 ("plead"), and other similar passages. — J. G. P.

"thy judgments [decisions, orders] are a great deep." (Ps. xxxvi. 6).

178. Therefore: Whenever and wherever there is a sinner who cannot any longer get on with his sins, nor go along carrying them himself, but like the prodigal son wants to go home and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son," - then and there do know that that sinner, whoever he may be, you or any one else, has the forgiveness of sins. And even if you, in the meanwhile, see him stymble and fall now and then, so that he himself is often not able to believe that he has the forgiveness of his sins, but you still notice that he with his heart is clinging to the cross of Jesus, and is looking at the blood which there flowed, then know that, nevertheless, that same person has the forgiveness of his sins just as certain as it is that God cannot lie. This belongs to those matters and things which in the word of God are most certain. It can never be limited nor weakened nor diminished, and neither does it need to be made greater. It is great enough as it is when it helps lost and prodigal sons and daughters to righteousness, and makes the dead to live again.

in the forgiveness of sins if I am to receive the forgiveness of sins." Well, if you can show the existence of any place in the Holy Scriptures where it is thus written, then it must be right and true to believe as you say; but before you allow the devil to bind your conscience with such a view of the matter, you ought to see if and where it may be found thus written in the word of God. You are, perhaps, astonished at such language; but, any way, pause before the word of God. Do you know where in that word such a passage stands? For if none such stands there, then it can never be safe for you or anybody else to stand on it—to stand on what does not exist! And this we can truly say: It stands nowhere; such a passage, teaching what you

suppose to be true in this matter, is not found anywhere in the Bible.* "What?" you say. "Is it not in accordance with the word of God that a sinner believes in the forgiveness of sins? Is it not written, 'Be it known unto you, that through this man [Jesus] is preached [or, announced] unto you the forgiveness of sins?' (Acts xiii. 38). And ought we not then to believe this preaching, or announcement?" Answer: That a sinner who with his sins has his abode and home in the blood of Jesus knows and believes that all his sins are forgiven him, that is good and right and important. But here the question is not about that matter; no, what here concerns us is the question as to how, or by means of what kind of faith, a sinner attains to the forgiveness of sins, according to the word, "Through his [lesus'] name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts x. 43). And as to this question and in this matter it is not said, "Believe in the forgiveness of sins." When the publican in the temple smote upon his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," then, surely, it is not said of him that he believed in the forgiveness of sins, but that he had received the forgiveness

^{*} Here the question is not concerning the existence of such a thing, or fact, as the forgiveness of sins;—that, of course, the Author does not deny, as will be seen farther on. But the question is here whether a person must believe in his sins' being forgiven — in other words, that he really has and possesses the forgiveness of his sins - as a condition for his receiving the forgiveness; or whether a person may really have his sins forgiven before he believes that they are forgiven. It is, in fact, the same question as the one that has often perplexed many souls about faith-healing: must a person who has prayed for healing, or for whose healing prayer has been made, believe that he is healed as a condition for his being healed? The object of the Author in the text is, as should be the object of every teacher of these subjects, to draw the eyes of the soul away from self and from the gift prayed for, and instead get them fixed only upon Christ, the Giver, in expectant humble faith and trust. Cf. Mark xi. 24, especially in the Rev. Vers. — J. G. P.

of sins and went home justified, that is said. Hence we can see that a sinner can *have received* and can *have*, or possess, the forgiveness of sins before he yet *believes* or is able to believe in the forgiveness of sins.

180. "But," you say, "if it be not through faith in the forgiveness of sins, by what kind of faith is it then that a sinner, according to the word of the apostle, is to receive remission of sins? For, any way, the Scriptures do definitely say that it is through faith." Answer: Thus it is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ": "whosoever [or, every one that] believeth in him," etc. (See Acts xvi. 31; x. 43). — "Well," you say, "that all amounts to the same thing, does it not? for what shall I believe about Jesus?" Answer: The Scriptures say, "Believe on Jesus," that is, put your trust in Jesus, or, simply trust him. But what that is, that you can easily see with your own eyes. Look, for instance, at those who believe, or trust, in mammon [earthly riches, goods, possessions]. How are they acting and behaving when they believe, or trust, in him, in this god of theirs? Answer: Why, they just simply have confidence in him, and hold him as their true and best helper, so that they who have him as such a helper are happy, while they who have him not as such are unhappy; therefore they also wholly depend on him, feel secure and satisfied in having him to trust to, and are in this their trust serene and glad both for the day that is present and for the day that is coming: but if he seems to disappoint them or to slip out of their hold, then they are restless, grasp after him with anxious cares, and look after him with tears in their eyes, for after all it is from him that they expect real and true help, etc. Now, it is the same way also with the faith in Jesus. God has not deposited the forgiveness of sins and righteousness like a treasure in a basket let down to the earth, requesting us to take care of and make use of the treasure in the basket: but he has sent Jesus, his only begotten Son, with the

office and charge to forgive sins, just as we have now already many times repeated.

181. If a father had a son lying sick in some place among strangers, and he sent him a prescription, and said, "Procure yourself medicine according to this," now, that might be good; but if he sent him medicine and said, "Take this," - well, that would be better; but if he sent him a physician and said, "Commit yourself to this man; he is tried and infallible in the art of healing the sick," - behold, this would be best. And the son, in case he believed the father's word, would then commit himself to and trust the man whom the father had sent for his healing. This would be believing in that person. Just so it is with the faith in Jesus. And consider how you act, or conduct yourself, when you day by day go about believing and trusting in Jesus. Do you then really do anything else than go about, as it were, leaning on him, or clinging to him, as being your dearly Beloved, your own Saviour? Look at the examples of all those who in the New Testament are called "believers." How much theological knowledge about Christ did the centurion have? (Matt. viii. 5-13). How much did the woman of Canaan know about the mysteries of Christ's person and work? (Matt. xv. 21-28). And yet both of these persons received the testimony of the Lord himself that their faith was uncommonly great, so that the Lord marveled at it. Yes, how much [little] Peter knew of the Lord's person and work, that he showed when he took the Lord aside and began to rebuke him for speaking of his death. (Matt. xvi. 22). Yet Peter believed in and loved the Lord. Well, the case of the believers at that time was this: From his preaching they heard that he was Christ, the promised Saviour; by his works they saw his preaching confirmed; and when they heard and saw this they put their trust in him and clung to him as the one who was the Saviour. In this consisted their faith; but when they thus believed in him.

then in his name [that is, by his being the one he showed himself to be and was believed to be] they had the forgiveness of sins, and lived, spiritually and happily lived.

- 182. Therefore John says in his gospel (we have before noticed something similar in his epistles)—of this faith he says: "These are written, that ye might [may] believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might [or, by believing ye may] have life through his name." (John xx. 31). This is the thing itself [that which is to be believed about the person, to wit: Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour, and trust in him as such, as the Christ, the Saviour for you. A remarkable example of this we have in John ivth. What was it that so impressed the Samaritan woman at the well, that she left her waterpot and went back into the city with a wonderful message? Answer: Nothing else than this that the man who was at the well had said to her that he was the Christ, which also seemed credible to her from his having told her all she had done. And when the Lord left Sychar, how did the believing Samaritans express their faith? Why, they just spoke thus to the woman: "Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (verse 42, Revised Version). Another example we have in John xith. There Martha expresses her faith on this wise: "I have believed [that is, "I have come to the belief and do now believe"] that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world' (verse 27, Rev. Ver.). And when the Lord afterwards prays at the tomb of Lazarus he speaks of faith on this wise: "That they [the people] may believe that thou [Father] hast sent me'' (verse 42).
- 183. Such is the *matter* and *thing* itself which the Scriptures present to us for faith, as also Paul says: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead,

thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9, Revised Version). But by this matter and thing of faith the Scriptures wish, as we have said before, to draw our hearts to that person Jesus, in order that we may place our confidence in him, because he is just the right man, the Christ, the Lord, the Saviour, delivered up unto death for our trespasses, and raised from out of death for our justification. (See Rom. iv. 25, Rev. Ver.). Therefore, wherever you see any one who will not and cannot keep silent about his sins before the Lord nor hide anything from him, and you see also that that one is resting on Jesus, - or, if that one is not able to be resting on him, you see however that he is still reaching after him and looking to him, even though he does so with fear in his heart and tears in his eyes, there you see one who is believing in Jesus. For however trembling and misgiving such a one may be, he still in his heart holds the Lord Jesus to be the Saviour, and he would gladly belong to him as his friend, his possession, if he only dared, if he only were sure that he would be allowed so great a privilege. This is a weak faith, but it is nevertheless a true faith, and that is the main thing.

must have, however, before I can receive the forgiveness of sins. For, any way, it is written, 'Preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins' (Luke iii. 3); and again, 'To give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins' (Acts v. 31); and again, the Lord Jesus commanded 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name.'" (Luke xxiv. 47).—This all sounds very nat ural, and God alone knows how many thousands of souls have been held back or frightened away from the mercy-seat by such thoughts or by unwise teaching on this point. Such talk as that just mentioned sounds wholly as though it were the pure word of God. Therefore we must more closely investigate this matter. That Christ and his apostles preached repentance, that is of course evident.

But mark: they never preached repentance in such a manner that they thereby shut out, or kept away, sinners from grace. In their view, repentance was never a fence, or a barrier, around the mercy-seat, as the Pharisees have made it. For when the Pharisees preach repentance it is not in their interest thereby to persuade and constrain sinners to come to Christ, but on the contrary to keep them from believing "too hastily." or "too soon," as they say. But to the apostles the preaching of repentance was the same as the inviting of sinners to turn and come to Jesus, just as though one were inviting people to a feast and were saying: "All things are ready; come, come at once." Thus, also, Peter says: "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts. iii. 19, Revised Version). Think, if a servant had the order from his master to invite certain persons to his, the master's, table, and to say to them, "Come in and eat," but that servant should misinterpret his master's meaning, and change his word, so that he, on the contrary, held back those for whom the invitation was intended, lest they should come in and eat, - what do you think the master would say of that servant? He would, most certainly, dismiss him from his service.

185. The Bible word for "repentance" really means "change of mind," and designates that work of God in man by which he (man) changes, or turns, his mind from sin to Jesus in order to find grace and be helped out of sin. That such is the case we can clearly see in the examples of repentance mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. When the prodigal son was returning home with the confession, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," — then that was repentance. (Luke xv.). When the publican in the temple smote upon his breast, and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," — then that was repentance. (Luke xviii.). When the dying thief on the cross turned to

· Jesus, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," — then that was repentance. (Luke xxiii.). When on the first day of Pentecost after the ascension of Christ about three thousand souls were pricked in their hearts, and began to ask the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" — then that was repentance. (Acts ii.). Repentance is not an undertaking to do this or that work, nor a performing of a certain act of worship, in order to make one's condition better or to prepare oneself for obtaining grace, but repentance is to come to Jesus with one's sins. Therefore when the Lord cries, "Repent," then he does not thereby mean, "Do this and that work first, afterwards I will forgive you your sins." but he does mean just this: "Come to me with your sins, in order that I may forgive you them, or remove them." When, therefore, repentance is preached in such a way that simple and sincere souls are frightened, or kept, from coming to Jesus, and it is said, "You must not yet believe, for you must first repent," - then that is a false and antichristian preaching. Just the coming to Jesus with one's sins, just that is repentance, and to come **now** is to repent now, and "now is the acceptable time." (2 Cor. vi. 2, Rev. Ver.).

I must certainly have." All right: believe then; have faith, in the name of the Lord Jesus. That is just what the question is all about: to wit, not whether a sinner must believe, but whether he may believe, that is, whether he is allowed, or permitted, to believe. To a hungry man, before whom we place food, it is not a grievous commandment, or a hard condition, when we say, "Come now, take of the food, and eat." And if he, while sitting there before the food, began anxiously and sorrowfully to say, "But certainly I must eat if I am to live," then we would say, "You foolish fellow, — eat, then, and live!" Likewise we must say to every such a one as is grieved and sorrowful because he must have faith, "Why, dear friend, just

believe, then." For, to have faith here is nothing else than simply to believe in Jesus, to trust in him, and to hold him as the Saviour, whose blood cleanses from all sins. To invite sinners to believe in Jesus, — why, that is like throwing out a life-saving plank to a drowning man in order to save him, at the same time saying to him: "Take hold of that; it will carry you." That commandment he would not let himself hear twice.

187. Therefore, this is the counsel of the Scriptures: To the mercy-seat with everything. As it is said: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. iv. 16). But the mercy-seat is Jesus, or him "God hath set forth to be a mercy-seat through faith in his blood." [Thus Rom. iii. 25 most correctly rendered]. Of this also Jesus himself says: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Matt. xi. 28); that is, "You who in consequence of your sins have an evil, uneasy, accusing, and burdened conscience, you who so gladly would be righteous before God if you only knew how to become such: intrust yourself to me, rely on me, for God has sent me to forgive you your sins, and to give you the righteousness which the law could never produce. Come you, who have lived, secretly or openly, in unchastity, in drunkenness, in hatred, in lying, and in all other abominations, - come, behold, I am your brother Jesus; God has sent me on just this mission: to give you repentance [that is, to make you repentant and desirous of forgiveness] and to forgive you your sins." - For as God had caused the brazen serpent to be lifted up for the healling of all who had been bitten by the fiery serpents, without distinction as to whether they had one wound or a hundred wounds, in like manner he has also given his only begotten Son for the justification of all sinners, without distinction, whether they have lived in sin in a refined and polite manner or in a coarse, vile, and vulgar way.

188. Yes, how desirous the Lord is that we should know that the forgiveness of sins is altogether undeserved, and covers and washes away the most blood-red sins, that he showed and proved when he after his resurrection commanded his disciples to go forth and in his name preach repentance and remission of sins. For to this command he joined this particular instruction, that they should begin at Jerusalem. (Luke xxiv. 47). That city which had sinned more grievously than any other city, that city which had stoned the prophets and had crucified the Prince of life, — that city should before any other city hear the preaching which in the name of Jesus announced the remission of sins and the justification by faith in him. But now, surely, you cannot be a worse sinner than you are if you are the worst one that can be! But even if you are the worst we have commandment to go to you first - not last - no, first, the very first one of all in order — we are commanded, we say, thus first to go to you with the preaching of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. If you are satisfied with that, very well; for certainly it is sufficient, and certainly it is true.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION,

"Pardon mine iniquity."

IV.

189. "The forgiveness of sins" — think what a glorious expression that is, how great and glorious a treasure it betokens and points to! And think, also, how many souls there are who down in their hearts are sighing and saving, "O that I had the forgiveness of sins!" They are in their consciences oppressed and burdened with their sins, and wish so earnestly that the Lord would forgive them their iniquities and transgressions. But in the meanwhile they think that the forgiveness of sins is a matter, or a thing, which lies somewhere far away, they do not know where it lies, and neither do they know the way to it, for how should they know the way when they do not know the place! And so they go about shackled, burdened, and without peace; and often they look with a depressed state of mind, yea, perhaps with tears in their eyes, upon the children of God, and think, "O that I were as happy as you are!" But how often they look up to heaven and sigh, "O dear Lord Jesus, how long wilt thou delay having mercy upon me and forgiving me my sins?" - that God knows. For he knows their hearts.

190. It admits of no doubt, that such have the forgiveness of sins. For the word of God says: "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed a-

gainst the LORD thy God." (Jer. iii. 13). But they do not know that they have the forgiveness of sins, and they do not believe it. They keep their abode at the cross with their sins; but the forgiveness, they think, is however not for them, but for others. They place all their confidence in Jesus, and keep their eyes fixed on Jesus; but still they do not believe in the forgiveness of sins, or that they have it. For all that, they are, by reason of their faith in Jesus, the children of God; but are at the same time as yet without peace because they do not yet venture to believe that they, in the blood of Jesus, have redemption, namely, the forgiveness of sins, which nevertheless they certainly have. To all appearance there is no difference between them and slaves, although they are heirs and lords over all the possessions, as Paul says in Gal. iv. 1. Towards such we must be compassionate, and we ought to come to their aid by announcing and communicating to them the forgiveness of sins, in the name of our Lord Jesus.

191. A great deal of harm has been occasioned within the church of God from the circumstance that the key of absolution [that is, the power, or authority, to forgive sins is not more in use than it is. During the rule of the papacy the opinion was gradually developed that the key of absolution belonged to a certain class, or office, namely, to the priests. Luther did indeed teach differently, as we shall see farther along; but after his time the popish error began to revive and to spread throughout the Lutheran church, so that it was generally thought that the key of absolution belonged to the clergy and accompanied their office, even if they themselves were bound in sins. But where such a thing is written in the Bible none has been given to know. But in the meanwhile the doctrine has been so far developed by the scribes [theologians] that they have at last wholly cast the key of absolution into the sea, alleging that the general preaching of the gospel is the true absolution, or that, at least, that

is absolution when to a mass of human beings (for the most part openly ungodly) there is announced after the general perfunctory confession preparatory to partaking of the Holy Communion a conditional forgiveness of sins. The consequence of all this has been, that the true absolution has gone out of use altogether. And how could it go otherwise? For, from the beginning it has been manifest that as soon as the church of God has committed itself into the hands of the scribes, these have taken away from it one treasure after another. Yea, so unused to the true absolution have we become, that now it hardly ever happens in the church of God that one person declares to the other the forgiveness of sins. And yet, how very well this key would need to be in use!

192. What true absolution is, that the Lord has shown both by word and by example. When, as related in Matt. ixth, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, he said: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." [Revised Version]. There you see, consequently, what absolution is, to wit: the announcement, or declaration, to the individual sinner, that his sins are forgiven him. Therefore, it would be a right use of absolution, if, when you see any one burdened in conscience on account of his sins, you would go to him and say, "Dear brother, your sins are forgiven"; or if, when you yourself were thus burdened, so that on account of your sins it would be difficult for you to believe the gospel, that is, the glad tidings of grace and peace for you, you should go to one of your brethren and say, "Behold, dear brother, this and that have I done; so and so is now my condition; thus and thus the case with me now stands; on account of this my conscience has become fettered and oppressed, so that I cannot with joy look up into the face of God. Now, I know that you have received authority of the Lord Jesus to forgive sins. Therefore, dear brother, do me the service of now declaring and communicating to me the forgiveness of sins, in order that I may again attain to peace." Then should your brother, according to the example and the manner of the Lord, say, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven." — But where at the present time are indeed such things practiced? No, if one says, "You ought to, or you may, believe in the forgiveness of sins," then that is now commonly the most and the highest one dares to say. But little or nothing is gained thereby, for then the conscience replies, "Yes, if I only could believe!" and so there is no absolution at all. No, not thus, "Believe in the forgiveness of sins"; but thus, "Your sins are forgiven," — that last, that is absolution.

- even dizzied, at this. I have also myself many a time stood dizzy and appalled at the greatness of this authority and privilege of the keys, so that I have not used this key of absolution where, however, I ought to have used it. But one may be surprised, or appalled, at it or not; that matters nothing as to the thing itself; for, any way, thus it is written: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit [forgive], they are remitted [forgiven] unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John xx. 22, 23). They that have the Holy Ghost, they have power to forgive sins; this power they have received of the Lord, and it is not right to leave this power unused. For it is needed for the edification of the church of God.
- 194. "Yes," you say, "but I might make a fearful mistake. When I hear any one confessing his sins, how can I know that he is not dissembling, that he is not a hypocrite?" Answer: God has never commanded you to try the heart, but wherever you see any one who, so far as you can judge, is weary and repentant of his sins, there you have power and commandment to announce and communicate to him, in behalf of the Lord, the forgiveness of sins. If now he be nothing else than a hypocrite, let that be his own business and responsibility. When

the Lord first sent forth his disciples to preach he commanded them to say wherever they entered: "Peace be to this house." (Matt. x. 12, 13; Luke x. 5, 6). If any one in that house was "a son of peace," then their peace would come and rest upon him; if not, their peace would return to them. "But," you say, "in that way I might strengthen, or confirm, hypocrites in their hypocrisy." — But we ask: Have you ever, in any case, tried to use this power? Perchance the devil has all the time hitherto with just such false scruples succeeded in hindering you from using it. Well then: begin now, for the nonce, in the name of the Lord. For, against all scruples which the devil awakens in your conscience, you can always set this reflection: "It can never be wrong or dangerous or a mistake to do as the Lord says." Those dangers, those dreaded mistakes, - why, they fall upon the Lord, and he knows well how to manage them. Only do you be so good as fearlessly to obey his word and do as he says.

195. Of this power to forgive sins Luther says: "This power all men have who are Christians As often as it is necessary, they can say and ought to say: 'Behold, O man, God offers you his grace, and forgives you all your sins; be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.'.... This voice shall not cease among the Christians even until the last day: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee, be of good cheer.' Hence, a Christian has power in this way to forgive sins. Therefore, when I say to you, 'Your sins are forgiven,' then hold this as certain and as sure as if God himself said it to you. For, otherwise, who would dare to do this, if Christ himself had not descended, put it into our mouths, and said that we ought to forgive one another his or her sins! As when he, in John xx. 22, 23, says: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them,' etc. If now there were no man who could forgive sin, but there were only laws and works, O how wretched and deplorable the situation would be for the poor, sad, distressed conscience! But now, since God has so filled the mouth of every one, that the one can say to the other, 'Unto you your sins shall be forgiven, whosoever you may be,' - now, the golden age, the year of jubilee, has come. Upon this we are to pride ourselves and be bold and defiant as over against sin, so that one can say to his brother who is in anguish and distress about his sins, 'Be glad and of good cheer, my brother; unto you your sins are forgiven.'.... This is what it means that God has given power unto men to forgive sins (Matt. ix. 6, 8), and hence it must increase the kingdom of Christ when one thus restores and refreshes and cheers the conscience." - So far Luther; and glory be to God for such words of life and truth. God grant that we also may begin to practice them, and that not only on certain great solemn occasions, but in the plain every-day life, as often as there may be need.

- 106. This forgiveness of sins extends to all sins, as David says: "O my soul, bless the LORD, who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." (Ps. ciii. 1-3). The Lord never forgives a little at a time, or a few sins at a time, a part to-day and a part to-morrow, but always all at once, and that so thoroughly that they will be remembered no more. (See Is. xLiii. 25; Jer. xxxi. 34). You never need, a single evening, to go and lie down in your sins. For as long as you keep your abode at the cross of Christ, there rests upon you an eternal, unchanging, and unchangeable grace which reigns and has dominion over all your sins. Sin takes away all boasting, but forgiveness takes away all your sins, and makes you righteous again, so that God gets the glory and praise. And when God gets glory, and you righteousness, then matters and things are surely going on aright. Then you have nothing else to do than to thank God and say, "Amen."
- 197. But what thanks God desires of us for his thus daily and kindly forgiving us all our sins, that the parable

of the ten thousand talents teaches us. (See Matt. xviii. 23-35). For when the man who owed his king ten thousand talents [about \$12,000,000] had received the remission of his whole debt, then the king desired that he too should remit to his fellow-servant the one hundred pence [about \$17] which that fellow-servant was owing him. Hence, instead of requiring anything for himself, God directs you to your brother, that you may exercise towards him the same mercy which God has exercised towards you, when he has forgiven you all your sins. Whatever your brother may have done wrong against you, it can never be compared with what you have done wrong against the Lord. In addition to this comes the circumstance that you also often offend against your brother, and therefore have need of forgiveness from him. Therefore, when it happens that your brother sins against you, and the devil comes and seeks to provoke you to wrath, then take care that he may not ensnare you. For if you let yourself be caught in the devil's provoking snares, so that you feel disinclined to forgive, or determined not to forgive, your brother, but, instead, you begin to hate him, then right away these words concern you: "If ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother his trespasses, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." (Matt. xviii. 35; vi. 15; Mark xi. 26).

198. Therefore Paul says to the Christians: "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. iii. 12, 13, Revised Version). Consequently, wherever you are, and with whatsoever kind of people you may have to do, be always prepared for the chances that all kinds of collisions are apt tô happen. For apt to sin you are, and apt to sin they are. And besides, also the devil is on hand, and begins preaching to you in

this way: "See here: it is your brother who is in the wrong; it is all his fault; it is he who ought to humble himself." Then he goes to your brother, and says the same thing about you. There! now it is about time for you to open your eyes as to that snare which the enemy is about to put around your neck, and now it behooves you earnestly to consider how the Lord Jesus has done and is daily doing towards you. Suppose it be so that it really is your brother who is all to blame, - it is not likely that it is often so, but if now it be so that you are wholly without blame, - say: how ought you now to act in the matter? If you should allow yourself to become enraged, lo! then you would not do as the Lord Jesus did; if you should begin to scold and insult your brother, lo! then you would not do as the Lord Jesus did; if you should begin to tell tales about your brother and to slander him and to try to disgrace him, lo! then you would not do as the Lord Jesus did; if you should think, "I don't care for him," lo! neither then would you do as the Lord Jesus did, has done, or is doing. But if you would be forbearing, and would forgive your brother his sin, and would humble yourself and wash his feet; if you, whenever you might see that the devil had so got hold of him, that he would not see his own guilt, but charged it to you, if you then all the more would have mercy on him, and watch how you might help him out of so dreadful a snare of the devil; or if your brother should happen to have a very mean nature, or disposition, so that such acts and moods of his occurred not simply once, but many times, yea, "seventy times seven," and you then nevertheless would exercise the same compassion "seventy times seven," so that your entire relation to him would be ruled by a disposition which would all the time be making you to think in this way, "Oh! how shall I be able to help my poor brother, so that the devil may not altogether ruin him?" - behold, if you would do thus, then most certainly the holy angels

would sing for joy, and point to you, and say, "Look at that man: he is disposed and is acting like Jesus, just exactly like Jesus!"

199. Think, also, what a paradise all Christian society and intercourse would be if such mutual forgiveness were practiced. At once there would then be an end of all sad and troublesome relations, of all annoyances and vexations, among the children of God. For all the troublesome and vexatious matters which arise in my dealings with the brethren, they do so arise from one of the following facts, or circumstances: to wit, either from this that the brethren sin against me, or from this that I sin against them, or from this that both I and they sin. Now, by my forgiving them their sins I would, at the same time this was done, be rid of all troubles and vexations which come from them; and by their forgiving me my sin I would, at the same time this was done, be rid of all troubles and vexations which come from it. For, as forgiveness removes all contention and disturbing elements between God and the sinner, so it removes all contention and disturbing elements also among sinners themselves, between the one and the other.

zoo. Consider, therefore, what a God we have, who in return, or as thanks, for his forgiving us our sins requires of us nothing else than that we should do just such things as would, if we did them, prepare for ourselves and for others a paradise upon this earth. Here he comes to me and forgives me all my sin, in order that I may forgive my brother; then he goes to my brother and forgives him his sin, in order that my brother may forgive me, and we thus both of us attain to a mutual peace. Verily, if we rightly considered this it would not be hard to forgive. And it is certain that there is nothing which tears to pieces so many nets and snares of the devil as does the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, if you would truly be in the devil's way, and oppose him, then forgive your brother

whatever he may do wrong against you. He who does so, he is to be considered as a real and true fire-proof and fire-opposing wall in the kingdom of God.

Let us, then, earnestly lay to heart also these words of our Master: "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." (John xiii. 12—17).

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION,

"What man is he that feareth the LORD?"

201. In the cxxxth Psalm (verse 4) David says: "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." Such words are incomprehensible to all our natural understanding. For as soon as one speaks of abundant forgiveness with God, or how he daily and kindly forgives sins unto whosoever comes to Jesus with his sins, right away comes up this objection: "Why, in this way one might sin just as much as one would like! One would only need to come to Jesus with his sin, then all would be clear and right again, and then one might continue to sin in the same way, and then again come, etc., etc. Oh, what a dreadful doctrine that would be!" -Well, now, hold on. If they who thus object knew what it is to come with one's sins to Jesus, they would talk differently. For, they who live in the enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins can bear witness, that the more simply and completely they believe that all their sins are forgiven, and that the way to the mercy-seat stands open to them as well for the days to come as for the days that are past, the more God-fearing and godly they are. This same fact also David knew, and the same experience he had, therefore he spoke as we now have seen in the psalm just quoted. Also in the psalm before us (the xxvth) he does the same. For, after he in the preceding verse has spoken

of the forgiveness of sins, he immediately here proceeds to speak of the fear of God, saying: "What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose" [according to the Old Swedish Version and the German of Luther the last sentence reads: "He shall teach him the best way"]. (Verse 12).

202. The Holy Scriptures speak a great deal of the fear of God. Therefore it is important to know what true fear of God is, and what it is not. That the true fear of God does not consist in one's being afraid of God is evident; for if it should consist in that, then the ungodly and especially the devils would be God-feariag, because they tremble and shudder in fear of God. [See James ii. 19, Revised Version]. Never, besides, do we in the Scriptures see that those who are therein called God-fearing are characterized as having been afraid of God. On the contrary, they have been very intimate and on confidential terms with God, and have had company, or communion, with him as with a friend of whom one is not at all afraid; which the examples of David, Moses, Abraham, and other saints do clearly show.

203. Neither does the true fear of God consist in one's doing certain religious works, or in performing certain devotional exercises. For, if it should consist in that, then the Lord ought to have called the Pharisees God-fearing above all others, for none did so many religious and devotional acts as they. — Neither does the true fear of God consist in one's being able to speak evangelically with the lips, to praise and extol the grace of God, etc., while the heart is carnal and full of carnal inclinations. For then also the hypocrites would be God-fearing. — No; the fear of God is such a disposition as fears more to transgress against God than to suffer anything whatsoever. An example of this disposition we find, for instance, in Joseph. For, when Potiphar's wife tried to entice him to sin, he answered: "How can I do this great wickedness,

and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). But thus Joseph did not speak because he was afraid of God. On the contrary, it was just the intimate relation in which he stood to God that caused him so to fear transgressing against him, that he would rather go to prison than he would sin. As the Lord says: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." (Jer. xxxii. 40). Therefore also an old teacher says: "To fear God is to have a filial reverence for him, and by a truly penetential respectfulness, by faith, and by obedience to esteem and honor him as one's most dearly beloved Father."

204. For such a fear of God David prays, saying: "Unite my heart to fear thy name." (Ps. Lxxxvi. 11*). To a like fear of God also Joshua exhorts, saying: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity [literally, "in perfection"] and in truth." (Josh. xxiv. 14). And also Samuel: "Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you." (1 Sam. xii. 24). And again David: "O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him." (Ps. xxxiv. 9). And also the Lord God himself: "The LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies." (2 Kings xvii. 39). And the people are exhorted sincerely to resolve and say: "Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his

^{* &}quot;Unite my heart", etc., that is, "unite it with thee, O Lord, so that I may truly fear thee as thou art known, and suitably to thy character." Or, according to the very forceable and quite correct rendering of the prayer by the Swedish Versions, following Luther's German: "Keep my heart to this one thing, that I fear thy name." With this agrees the interpretation of several commentators who make the literal expression, "unite my heart", etc., equivalent to: "Unite all my powers and impel them towards one object, to wit, to fear thy name." Hence, simply this: "Let me, or help me, with an undivided heart fear thy name." — J. G. P.

season." (Jer. v. 24). Also in Rev. xiv. 7 this fear of God is spoken of, as when it is said of the angel who flew in the midst of heaven with "the everlasting gospel," that he cried with a loud voice, saying: "Fear God, and give glory to him;.... worship him that made heaven, and earth," etc. And Peter says to the Christians: "Fear God. Honour the king." (I Pet. ii. 17).

205. These admonitions and exhortations to the fear of God we need also with all diligence to lay to heart. For when the devil sees that he can no longer hold us captive under the yoke of the law, at once he is ready to lead us into a haughty, undisciplined, audacious disposition, and into a carnal, unspiritual, and self-willed manner of being and acting that is far from the fear of the Lord. Such a state of things one often notices in the general life and conduct of different persons; yes, one may even detect oneself now and then as caught in the self-same snare. Where now this state is allowed to continue unhindered. there the spiritual life dies out, and leaves in its stead a sort of "christianity" which in mirth and hilarity, in jests and jokes, shows its (pretended) gladness over the grace of God, and in an overconfident, harsh, and carnal judging of others shows its spiritual liberty. But such gladness is not the gladness of which it is said, "Rejoice with trembling" [that is, with reverence and self-distrust as opposed to levity and pride]. (Ps. ii. 11). It is not the gladness of which it is said, "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh. viii. 10), and "I will run the way of thy commandments, O LORD, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" [that is, "make glad, or comfort, my heart," which expresses "the feeling of well-being and joy as contrasted with mental oppression"]. (Ps. cxix. 32). It is not the gladness of which Mary sang, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." (Luke i. 46, 47). Neither is that just mentioned judging of others the true spiritual liberty. No; such a disposition

as does not seek to cover, excuse, raise up, and heal one who anywhere may be seen to have fallen into sin or error, but, on the contrary, as soon as one is fallen, is ready to trample upon him, in order that the person so doing may himself mount a notch higher in estimation such a disposition does certainly not show spiritual liberty, but just the very opposite, to wit, liberty from all spirituality, want of the Spirit of God. Dear brethren and sisters in the grace of our Lord Iesus Christ, we cannot indeed be ignorant of the devices of Satan. (See 2 Cor. ii. 11). Let us therefore "awake to righteousness," and "purge out the old leaven, that we may be a new lump," as is befitting "the elect of God, holy and beloved," so that we may always walk in the fear of God, and in a sanctified manner of life, to the praise of his holy name. (See I Cor. xv. 34; v. 7; Col. iii. 12; 2 Pet. iii. 11).

206. But if we understand the importance of these admonitions and exhortations to walk in the fear of the Lord, then ought we not only to allow ourselves to be admonished by our sense or understanding of them, so that we for our own part give heed to the same; but we ought also to allow ourselves to be impelled by them, so that we may mutually practice them, namely, in this way: whenever we see any brother beginning to be carnally secure, lax, and frivolous, then we are to hasten to his rescue and say, "Look here, my dear brother, the saints of God ought to walk in the fear of God, as it is said, 'O fear the LORD, ye his saints." (Ps. xxxiv. 9).—This ought to be the more held forth, as at the present time it has almost totally fallen into disuse among Christians mutually to admonish and reprove one another. Yes, alas! it has come even so far, that one hardly dares to reprove, or admonish, another, but must go about dreading to do so, even if one sees how the devil is engaged in the very act of leading the brother away into frivolity. But such a feeling of dread is not of God, but of the devil. For the devil is not willing that

any one should hinder him in his work; therefore he also exerts all his powers that we may leave him in peace, just as hunters and trappers are desirous that no one may frighten the animals they wish to get at. Oh! let us wake up before it is too late. Let us begin to cry to the Lord to fill our hearts with the spirit of his fear. Let us also, when we are together, more than hitherto pray about this matter, and, besides, lead one another to contemplate how in this matter we have sinned, and how it needs to be otherwise, and how we now may begin to act differently, so that we henceforth endeavor to pay more attention to one another, and to be quick to spoil the business of the devil wherever one brother sees that he, the devil, is setting traps or laying snares for another brother.

207. How well-pleasing such a fear of God is in the eyes of God, of this his word bears witness in many places. Thus David says: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee." (Ps. xxxi. 19). And again: "Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." (Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19). And again: "Surely his [the LORD'S] salvation is nigh them that fear him." (Ps. Lxxxv. 9). And again: "He hath given [or, he gives] meat unto them that fear him." (Ps. cxi. 5). And again: "He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great." (Ps cxv. 13). And again: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." (Ps. ciii. 11). And again: "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD..... Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD." (Ps. cxxviii. 1, 4). And again: "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." (Ps. CxLvii. 11). And again: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." (Ps. ciii. 13). And Peter says: "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" [or, "acceptable to him"]. (Acts x. 35). And in Luke i. 50 Mary sings: "His [the Lord's] mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation." — But when we hear such things, we must not lie down to rest in saying, "that is right and good"; but let us go to the Lord and pray, "Dear Lord Jesus, do thou help me, too, so that I may begin to walk in the fear of God."

208. An expression of this pleasure of God in those who fear him we have also here in our text before us, where it is said: "What man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach [or, instruct] in the way that he shall choose." That is just as the Lord himself says in Ps. xxxii. 8: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Where the heart is unchanged, unregenerate, there man walks his own ways, which lead to death; as Solomon says: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov. xiv. 12). For while his heart is shut against the Lord, the Lord cannot lead him by his Spirit. Therefore the Scriptures say of such, that they walk in darkness, and know not whither they are going. (See, e. g., John xii. 35; I John ii. II). Just at the time they are thinking that they understand all things so rightly and well, they do not at all receive, or discern, anything of that which belongs to the Spirit of God. (See I Cor. ii. 14). For their hearts are darkened, and their minds are rendered dull, or blunt, so that they regard even the work of the Spirit of God as foolishness and fanaticism, but their own will as the right way, and their own darkness as the true light. On the contrary, wherever there is such a disposition as fears the Lord; wherever a self-distrusting spirit rules in the heart, so that the person is distrustful of himself, afraid of himself, and therefore keeps close to the Lord, just as a child clings close to its father when it walks with him in the dark

on an unfamiliar way; — there it will never fail that the Lord, according to his promise, will guide the poor, distressed, lowly soul aright. For it is a judgment, a decree, a rule, or an order, of the Lord, that he suffers the proud and defiant spirits to go their own ways, while, on the contrary, the broken-hearted, the God-fearing souls he guides with his eyes "in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." O let us consider this, — let us, as many of us as live in faith, let us consider and remember this, — that only so long as there dwells within us a self-distrustful and fearing spirit, one that is afraid of all evil, of doing or being wrong, only so long can we remain in the right way, "in the paths of righteousness." If, on the contrary, we become self-satisfied, proud, and secure, then soon it will all be over with us as believers.

209. But now it being so that the Lord teaches those who fear him, and guides them with his eyes, these can therefore most certainly rest assured that they are safe however strange their way may appear to be. Just think: that in all kinds of weather, in all storms, temptations, and difficulties, outward and inward, we may commit, yea, abandon, ourselves to God, and rely on him, on his eyes, on his faithfulness, — that is an inexpressible security, safety, rest. As the Scriptures say: "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge." (Prov. xiv. 26). And again: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

210. I have many times journeyed over very considerable distances with my children; but it has never been any concern to the children whether the journey has been by land or by sea, whether it has extended east or west; neither have they ever concerned themselves about

tickets, money, time, or traveling effects; no, they have only followed along, and always have they reached the same destination as I. And thus, in like manner, it shall surely go with all the children of God. Only follow along. The Lord shows his children the way; and where that may not be enough, there he himself guides them; but where neither that may be enough, there he carries them. "Even to your old age, even to hoar hairs, I will carry you," he says; "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver yoù." (Is. XLvi. 4). Fear the Lord, ye his saints, and know that you are safe in relying on him. Though he may lead you in strange and unexpected ways, still only follow; for, after all, homeward it goes, homeward he leads. His faithfulness stands as security for that.

211. What besides might be said on these words, that has already, as to the main points, been said in our Meditations on verses 4, 8, and 9. Therefore we will now leave these matters, and proceed to consider the other promises following next in order, to wit, these: "His soul shall dwell at ease [literally, as the margin reads, "shall lodge in goodness," or, "in good," that is, in a good thing, or in a good state*]; and his seed shall inherit the earth." (Verse 13). In the first of these two promises there is opened to us a little view and representation of the land of glory, the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly was a type. Just think: what a privilege, what a glorious prospect, after having been here, in this vale of sorrows, taught, and instructed, and led, and guided, and carried, -- all this by the Lord himself,—then, when the journey is over, to arrive into the haven of that good, that better land where the Lord himself dwells! Thus the Lord says by Isaiah, prefiguring the heavenly by the earthly land: "The needy shall lie down in safety." (Is. xiv. 30). And

^{*} Thus, by the adjective in the neuter gender, "in the good," the Swedish and the German Versions render the Hebrew b'tob. — J. G. P.

again: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Is. xxxii. 18). These indeed are prospects which ought to teach and enable us to "run with patience the race that is set before us." (Heb. xii. 1). Only a little while, and then we shall "dwell at ease," dwell "in good," in the good and blessed land. O that we were there!

- 212. Of this glory the Scriptures testify that it passes all understanding. Thus Is. Lxiv. 4 says: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." And Paul says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (I Cor. ii. 9). And again: "I know a man in Christ.... such a one (was) caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Cor. xii. 2—4, Revised Version). — This glory also far transcends all the affliction which we here may experience; as Paul says: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17). And again: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" [or "to us-ward"]. (Rom. viii. 18).
- character of this glory let us hear some of the testimonies of the Scriptures. In Isaiah (xxv. 8, 9) it is said: "He [the LORD] will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke [the reproach] of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we

have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." And again (in chap. xxxv. 10): "The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." And again (in chap. xLix. 10): "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them." And again (in chap. Li. 11): "The redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning [sighing] shall flee away." And again (in chap. Lxv. 17-19): "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former [things] shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." And in Ps. Cxxvi. 1 and 2 it is said [according to the Old Swedish and the German Versions*]: "When the LORD shall de-

^{*} These Versions translate the past tenses of the Hebrew verbs, in the passage, by future tenses, which is literally less correct than as the English Versions render said tenses, but may be allowable in accordance with several of the older Jewish commentators and the grammatical rule that the Hebrew perfect is frequently used as a prophetic future "when viewed as past"; that is, "prophetic writers, surveying the future from an ideal point of view, give to their predictions the form of a recital of what has already taken place." But as the psalmist, in the psalm quoted above, most probably refers to actually past events, it is better to give the verbs their past tense, and then simply regard the passage (verses 1 to 3) as a typical, or prefigurative, promise and prophecy of the future, hence as applicable to another and higher and more perfect deliverance from captivity,

liver the captives of Zion, then we shall be like them that dream; then our mouth shall be full of laughter, and our tongue full of singing." However great and many we may have imagined the glories of that good land to be—the land in which, according to the promise of God, our souls shall forever dwell,—still the reality shall so far exceed all our conceptions and imaginings, that when we shall behold it (the reality) we shall seem to ourselves to be mere dreamers.

214. Of this same glory John testifies, in speaking of a certain class of saints who are at last to be there: "They are before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of water of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. vii. 15-17, Revised Version). And again: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. xxi. 4). In view of the same glory Paul exclaims so triumphantly: "When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immorality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' O death, where is thy sting? O grave [death], where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 54-57).

music this is, from the heavenly Canaan, from the good, such as is spoken of in New Testament passages like Luke xxi. 27—36; Rom. viii. 19—23; 1 John iii. 2. — J. G.P.

the blessed land where our souls shall be permitted to dwell and rest forever. And all the information which we obtain in the Scriptures about and from this our good and blessed home has a similar sound and import. "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for ever more," says David. (Ps. xvi. 11). And again: "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures [literally, "thou shalt cause them to drink a stream of thy pleasures"]. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." (Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9). And in Isaiah (chap. Lx. 20) the Lord God says: "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." And the Lord Jesus says: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (John xiv. 2, 3; xvi. 22). And Peter says: "Praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom [that is, on account of whom, and on the point of seeing whom], though now ye see him not, yet (ye are) believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (I Pet. i. 7, 8. Revised Version). And again: "God begat us again unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded by faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (Verses 3-5, Revised Version).

216. But how can it be possible for us to enjoy such eternal happiness in that good land, that beautiful home of ours, where our God dwells, and where our souls shall dwell? Answer: It will be possible for us to enjoy such

happiness there because we are then transformed into full likeness with our Lord Jesus, and thus with God; as Paul says: "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23, Revised Version). And Peter says: "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Pet. iii. 13). And John says: "Beloved, now are we the sons [children] of God, and it doth not yet appear [it is not yet made manifest] what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (I John iii. 2). All sorrow, all suffering, all death have through sin entered into the world, and continue only through sin. When, therefore, all sin shall have been cleaned out, and shall have been put away forever, then also will there forever be an end to all that is called sorrow or death. Yes, think of it, we shall not drag our sins with us into heaven, — of that we have the most certain promises. There shall no longer be any sin, neither confession of sins, nor forgiveness of sins, nor prayer, nor faith, - no, all this shall cease, and shall there have been done away; but we shall see the face of the Lord, and his name shall be upon our foreheads. There will be an everlasting and perfect righteousness; not an imputed righteousness, such as we here have through faith; but an everlasting and perfect purity from all sin in all our being, in all our thoughts, words, and deeds. We shall be like our God and our Lord Jesus. "For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom. viii. 29, Revised Version). "And as we have borne the image of the earthy [man, Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" [that is, of the heavenly man, the second Adam, Jesus]. (I Cor. xv. 49).

217. But let us still go on casting one look after another into "the good," the blessed land, where our souls shall dwell. Thus says the Lord Jesus: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 24). And Paul says: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 4). And again the Lord Jesus says: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Rev. ii. 7). And again: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Rev. ii. 11). And again: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Rev. ii. 17). And again: "He that overcometh,.... to him will I give power over the nations..... And I will give him the morning star." (Rev. ii. 26-28), And again: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (Rev. iii. 5). And again: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." (Rev. iii. 12). And again: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. iii. 21). - Say, is it not beautiful, this view of "the good," the good place and the good things, in which our souls shall dwell?

218. But yet a few more of the testimonies of the Scriptures. "Round about the throne were four and

twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold." (Rev. iv. 4, Revised Version). Then further: "And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands: saying with a great voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth. and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, 'Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen.' And the elders fell down and worshipped." (Rev. v. 11-14, Revised Version). And then: "After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, 'Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, 'Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.' "-But how their robes had become so white, that we are told by one of the elders, who says: "These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 9-17, Pevised Version).

219. But with all this it is not enough yet. The

Scriptures further teach, also, that our bodies shall be changed and be raised glorified out of the earth. Of this Paul speaks throughout the entire xvth chapter of first Corinthians. Listen to some of its closing passages: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It [the body] is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body [or, "If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." Revised Version].... Behold, I shew [tell] you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immorality." (Verses 42-44, 51-53). Of this the same apostle speaks in another epistle: "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." (Phil. iii. 20, 21, Revised Version). Yes, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," says our Lord himself. (Matt. xiii. 43). Oh! indeed, "blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev. xix. 9). And now consider that — as the angel in the Revelation assured the seer (Rev. xix. 9; xxi. 5; xxii. 6) all these words are "the faithful and true words of God," no fables, no exaggerations, but on the contrary so far below the reality, that when we get home and begin to see it all we shall be "like them that dream." What we here have thought and believed, that shall, in comparison with the reality, be like a little rush-light compared with the

sun. Surely we may with David exclaim: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. xvii. 15); that is, the immediate beholding of thee, O Lord, will satisfy and fill my soul by my becoming like thee when once I shall awake from the night of this present suffering existence and from the night of death.

220. But what David here adds, namely this, "and his seed shall inherit the earth" [more correctly as the Revised Version has it, "the land", that can indeed be explained as being equivalent to what the Lord says, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." (Matt. v. 5). David would then by these words say that they who fear the Lord shall some time come to possess the whole earth, that is, the new earth for which we are looking according to the promise of God. (2 Pet. iii. 13). "For the earnest expectation of creation itself," says Paul, "waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God." (Rom. viii. 19, 21). All the changes and transformations that are going on in nature, in creation, shall go on more and more, and become greater and greater, towards the glorification of this nature and creation at the time "when that which is perfect is come." (1 Cor. xiii. 10). The "great gulf fixed" between heaven and earth, and the opposition into which they have been brought to each other - both gulf and oppsition having been caused by sin, — that gulf and that opposition shall be done away; and the children, God's children, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, shall possess all things as kings and priests before God. — However, the words of David can be understood also as containing the promise that God will care for the posterity ("seed") of his children here upon the earth, so that, when they must depart from this world and leave them behind, they need not be uneasy about them, but can confidently and safely commit them to him, knowing for certain that he will be both as a father and as a mother to them. This, too, is a promise firmly grounded in the word of God besides that which is written here, and is a promise that is very good for the children of God to have.

221. But if now it is an assured fact that our souls shall dwell "in the good," in that good, blessed land, then from it we may derive especially three important lessons, which the word of God connects with these beautiful prospects. The first lesson is this: "Rejoicing in hope." (Rom. xii. 12). Just think how small, simple, yea, mean everything in this world becomes when we place it and view it along-side of those good things, and that good state, and that blessed land, in which our souls shall dwell. When this life is at its best, it is labor, and care, and sorrow. (See Ps. xc. 10). Here are thousands of things which imbitter life; and if there happens to be anything that delights the heart, it must in a short time be relinquished and left behind. All, even what is best of things here, is vanity, vanity of vanities. (Eccles. i. 2). But in the good, blessed land where our souls shall dwell, there it is not so; there is nothing to imbitter life, nothing to disturb enjoyment; no, "in the presence of God there is fulness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. xvi. 11). Therefore, as you rejoice when you are expecting even some transitory good upon this earth; as you rejoice in hope to reach your own sweet home after a long absence; as a betrothed rejoices, that with every day her marriage is drawing a step nearer; so do you rejoice still more while you know that, with every hour, that day is drawing nearer when with new eyes you shall behold God and the Lamb, and be like him in whom you here have believed. For what is all happiness or misery here as compared with the promise of our best and truest Friend, and its realization: "Where

I am, there ye shall be also." (John xiv. 3). Soon comes the night of our departure hence, and then the day of our glory!

"This life's a dream, an empty show. But the bright world to which I go Hath joys substantial and sincere; When shall I wake, and find me there? Oh, glorious hour! oh, blest abode! I shall be near and like my God."

The second lesson which the Scriptures connect with the prospect of eternal glory is this: "Be patient in tribulation, continuing stedfastly in prayer." (Rom. xii. 12, R. V.). Do not be astonished nor think it strange that the way is narrow and difficult. It was so for the Lord Jesus; it has been so for all saints. "Through much tribulation [or, many tribulations] we must enter into the kingdom of God," says Paul. (Acts xiv. 22). And that can never be changed; but what does it matter, when nevertheless we do enter into the kingdom of God? "For I reckon," says Paul again, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18). And again: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17). But what, however, is most likely and most calculated to help us to be patient amid affliction is this, namely: that all this affliction is a means whereby God will make us tried and precious; as he says: "Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have tried thee in the furnace of affliction." [Is. xLviii. 10, Revised Version, with the word "tried" in the margin, or as a note, which agrees with the Swedish and German Versions]. Of this Paul sings: "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom.

v. 3, 5). And the apostle Peter likens such affliction, or trial, to the fire in which a goldsmith refines and purges gold. (See I Pet. i. 7). Without fire the goldsmith could, indeed, not make many ornaments out of the gold; but let him use the fire, and then his work will amount to something. Likewise also God could certainly not without the furnace of affliction get any soul into heaven. No, since the fall we are not so constituted, that we can get to or are fit for heaven without such refining. But just let him make use of that furnace, and then it will go.

223. But knowing this, let us then be patient. will last but a little while. Soon the time for sweet rest will have come - the eternal rest "in the good," in that blessed land, where our souls shall dwell. And there, surely, we will not say anything bad about the way the Lord has led us thither. No, that which has here caused us the bitterest pain, and pressed forth the heaviest sighs and most of our tears, that will most likely be the cause of the most glorious praise. When one has been out on a journey, and during that journey has experienced many straits and difficulties and also much suffering, then it is quite customary, afterwards, when one has got home, to talk especially of these sufferings and difficulties. (Yes, among the children of the world it is customary even roundly to boast of the sufferings and troubles through which they have passed). But it being a fact, that one thus, safely landed in an earthly home, with particular gladness talks of the dangers and sufferings one has gone through,-much more shall we then, when we are at home in heaven, loudly praise God for the past experienced dangers and difficulties, especially as we then fully understand how they, too, have been necessary for our attaining and preservation unto everlasting life. Wait yet only a little while. "When the Lord shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" for, "to be marvelled at in all them that believed", 2 Thess.

i. 10, Revised Version], then, if you are one of those saints, one of them that here believed in him, then you will understand why he led you as he did, and not otherwise.

- 224. The third lesson which the Scriptures connect with the prospect of the eternal glory, John comprises in these words, thus: "Every man that hath this hope in him [or, "set on him," i. e., Jesus] purifieth himself, even as he [the Lord Jesus] is pure." (1 John iii. 3). Of this also Paul says: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness [defilement] of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1). And again: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery [or, "striveth in the games"] is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (I Cor. ix. 24, 25). And Peter says: "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Pet. iii. 13, 14).
- 225. The more we give heed to, and the more we with our hearts live in, those things which we are expecting to receive in heaven and, generally, in the world and ages to come, the more heavenly-minded will we become; and the more heavenly-minded we become, the more will our lives bear the marks of such a state and quality of mind. Therefore, since we have such blessedness in view, let us "forget those things which are behind, and stretch forward to the things which are before." (Phil. iii. 13, Revised Version). If in any respect we are well off here on earth, let us be watchful lest our hearts begin to stick fast in temporal well-being. For we shall not dwell here. If in any respect we are hard pressed, or in straitened cir-

cumstances, here on earth, let us be patient. For we shall not dwell here. Only a little while yet, and then will come the end both of earth's joys and of earth's sorrows, both of its supplies and its wants; and then shall our souls, according to the promise of God, "dwell in the good," in the good, blessed land where the Lord God himself does dwell.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him."

226. We saw in the preceding Meditation what it is to fear the Lord. Here it is now further said: "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him' (verse 14). More properly, according to the Hebrew, these words should in English read thus: "The counsel of the Lord is for them that fear him." "The counsel of the Lord" is his familiar intercourse, as when friends sit familiarly together and consult with each other. (That is the thought contained in the Hebrew word which David here uses*). Such an intimacy we find, for instance, in the history of Abraham. For there was such an intimacy on the part of God, that he said: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. xviii. 17). Therefore, also, Abraham especially is called the friend of God — "Abraham my friend," says the Lord himself. (Is. xLi. 8). Such

^{*} The Heb. sod means, first, properly, "a sitting, as for conversation or consultation," hence, "a circle," "an assembly"; then, metaphorically, "mutual consultation", "counsel, taken together and confidential", hence, as here, "the confidential converse of God", as with his prophets or pious ones generally. See, e. g., Prov. iii. 32; Jer. xxiii. 18, 22; Am. iii. 7. Thus the word comes to mean also friendship, intimacy, and the like; as, Job xix. 19; xxix. 4, etc. The Revised Version has therefore here in the psalm (xxv. 14) in the margin, or as a foot-note, "Or, counsel Or, friendship." — J. G. P.

an intimacy we find to have existed also between the Lord and his disciples (John especially); so also between the Lord and the members of a family in Bethany, and so forth as to many others.

227. In order to understand this we need only to pay attention to some facts of experience. Between the Lord and those who despise or reject him there always subsists an *estranged* relation. For though the ungodly even perform, or take part in, all kinds of devotional exercises, still there is not in them, nor comes there out of all their performances, any intimate heart relation between them and God. No; all they do, - their praying, their hearing of the word of God, their going to the Holy Communion, — all amounts only to a series of religious compliments, which they must tender to God, "holy performances", by which they would serve and reverence him, in order to gain his favor. All these opportunities of grace which God has prepared for sinners, these are to them a heavy and joyless divine service which, as they think, Christian duty obliges them to attend to. To this they bear witness, even against themselves, in their thinking that the life of the children of God must be a burdened and joyless life, which they would not think if they did not know that such an intimacy with God as the children of God have would make their own life burdened and joyless. But as they find it to be burdensome to exercise close converse with God, then also thereby they manifest that their hearts are not intimate with him. if they were intimate with him it would not be burdensome to them to hold converse, commune, and live with him. Such a burdensome and joyless serving of God the Lord has described in "the elder son," the brother of the prodigal son, which brother said to the father: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." (Luke xv.

29). In short, as we have said: their hearts are estranged from the Lord, and kept at a distance from him, whether they outwardly conduct themselves as despisers of him or as such as would serve him and would be God-fearing. To be dead is to be dead, no matter whether the dead be shrouded in costly and fine or in poor and miserable habiliments.

228. It is altogether different with them that fear the Lord. They may indeed be very much unlike one another; yea, at different times they are considerably unlike themselves. But in one thing they are nevertheless all and always alike, to wit: in the disposition, and in their being sensible, that they cannot do without the Lord, but that they need him in everything; as Peter said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi. 68). Yes, so characteristic of them is this their sense, or disposition, that all their courage, peace, and power depend on him. If they may see his countenance, then they are glad; if he withdraws himself or is hid to them, then they are sad and restless. Just so David complains: "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul [that is, in vain form plans of escape], having sorrow in my heart daily?" (Ps. xiii. 1, 2). And again: "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Ps. xxx. 7). For such persons it is not burdensome to live and walk with the Lord, and to serve him. No; that yoke is to them easy and light. But what to them is burdensome is this that they still must feel their hearts to be so cold and dead when they, however, would that they were thoroughly fervent and spiritual. The law of sin which is in their members (see Rom. vii. 23), that is their load and burden; yes, that burden is often so heavy, that they sigh and groan: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" (Rom. vii. 24, Revised Version, margin, or note). Could they only be such as they would like to be, O then they would instantly be as holy and pure as God is.

229. Between these and the Lord there exists, consequently, an intimate relation — and that mutually, on the part of the one as well as on the part of the other. On the part of the Lord this intimate relation shows itself in this that he, as it were, pours out his heart to them. and lavishes upon them the infinite riches of his grace, in order that they may perceive and understand the love wherewith he has loved them. This affectionate and cordial intimacy of God the Scriptures set forth in the strongest words and the richest pictures. For instance, thus it is said: "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child?* for since I spake against him [or, "for as often as I speak against him" I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the LORD." (Jer. xxxi. 20). Just think: what can a loving person say that is more affectionate than that his or her heart is "troubled."

^{*} In the Swedish New and Old Versions, and in Luther's German, both these questions have the negative particle "not", with the idea of strengthening, or emphasizing, the exclamations, thus: "Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant [a darling] child?" Let the questions be uttered as strong exclamations, in a tone of surprise, and with great emphasis on "is", then certainly a beautiful and forcible meaning of the verse becomes very apparent; the following 'for' is then more easily understood. But though the insertion of the "not" may be defended (from the varied uses of the Heb. interrogative particles h'-im, "whether - or," which introduce the questions), it had better be left out, the verse then meaning: "Jehovah asks himself, surprised, as it were, at having such tender feelings towards Ephraim [i. e., the rebellious ten tribes of Israel], if then Ephraim is his favorite son, or darling child, since, often as he has had to speak sentences of reprobation against him, yet he has never been able to forget him; and when he is thus again and again reminded of him, the old feelings of love and pity are excited anew." (From Nägelsbach, in Lange's Commentary). - On the expression farther on in the verse, "my bowels are troubled," which according to the Swedish reads, "my heart breaks," see my note to § 83, page 90. - J. G. P.

"moved," or "breaking with compassion," for another? When we would express the highest degree of wrath we are accustomed to say that the heart could fairly burst with wrath, or break because of wrath. When we would express the deepest sorrow we say that the heart bursts, or breaks, because of trouble, sorrow, or grief. When a man loves a woman with a true, hearty love, then he cannot restrain it; it presses outward from within his heart; it must out; he cannot eat, nor sleep, nor work—he cannot live—if he may not pour out his heart. And now our God says that his heart is breaking, or is "troubled," moved, stirred, and that with mercy, so that he must show mercy. Therefore he breaks forth also in Isaiah (chap. xLi. 14): "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men [or, "ye few men"*] of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Hear what affectionate language this really is: "Thou worm Jacob," "ye poor lot [or, ye little people] Israel." These are truly pet, caressing names, titles of endearment that have done thousands upon thousands of sinners good way down to the depths of their hearts. Yes, when in dark days the heart is not able to retain any of the most glorious promises of grace, then are, however, such titles of endearment generally apt to go in, and to find room, and to support the soul, so that it does not despair.

230. But let us still hear some words in which the Lord in a tender and affectionate way pours out his heart to and over them that fear him. In Isaiah, chap. xLiii. 4, he says: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." And in

^{*} According to the Old Swedish Version and Luther's German, "ye poor (or, sorry) lot Israel," — "ihr armer Haufe Israel." That quaint translation is, indeed, warranted, though not necessary, by the Hebrew use of the feminine verbal form in the word for "fear," expressing the Oriental idea of weakness and lowliness. Hence, other renderings: "ye little people Israel," "ye weak and few and lowly men of Israel," etc. -J. G. P.

verse 15: "I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King." And in verses 18 and 19: "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." And in verses 22 to 25 inclusive: "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel" [this last clause had better be rendered as the Swedish and German Versions, and many commentators, have it: "that thou shouldst have wearied thyself with me, O Israel"]. "Thou hast not brought me the small cattle [lambs, kids, etc.] of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane [calamus] with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." And again (in chap. xLix. 13): "Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted" [or, "lowly ones"]. Hear what wonderful language! The heavens, the earth, and the mountains are exhorted to rejoice and praise because the Lord is comforting his poor, afflicted, lowly people. Verily: it is as if the Lord did not know how he should affectionately and tenderly enough express the overflowing feelings of intimacy of heart with them that fear him.

231. But not only by such words as we have now seen and heard, but also by the finest and richest of pictures does the Lord express his heart's tender intimacy with them that fear him. Thus the Scriptures liken them to sheep, and himself to a shepherd, saying: "He

shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with [in] his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." (Is. xL. II). And he himself says: "I will feed my flock [my sheep], and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." (Ezek. xxxiv. 15, 16). Picture to yourself a shepherd whose whole business it is to care for and attend to the sheep, to lead them into green pastures and to cool fresh waters, a shepherd who goes among the flock gathering up the young lambs in his arms, carrying them in his bosom, hunting up the lost ones, binding up the wounded, and tenderly nursing the sick, - picture to yourself such a shepherd, and know that there you have a faint, but a true, likeness of the cordial devotion with which the Lord attends to his sheep.

232. Likewise, the Lord likens himself to a bird which with its wings and feathers covers its young, or little ones. As Isaiah says: "As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will pass over and preserve it." (Is. xxxi. 5, Revised Version). Of this it is said also in Ps. xci. 1—4: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust..... He shall cover thee with his feathers [pinions], and under his wings shalt thou trust" [or, "take refuge"]. And in Ps. xxxvi. 7 it is said: "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust [or, take refuge] under the shadow of thy wings." In Ps. Lvii. I David says: "My soul trusteth [taketh refuge] in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." Therefore he also prays as in

Ps. xvii. 8: "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings." And then he exults as in Ps. Lxiii. 7: "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." — Elsewhere the Lord likens his children, or people, to "bruised reeds" and "dimly burning wicks," which need to be handled in the gentlest and most careful manner, in order that they may not be altogether crushed and quenched. [Is. xLii. 3; cf. Revised Version, margin, or note]. — And, again, he likens himself also to a mother, saying: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Is. xLix. 15). And again: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." (Is. Lxvi. 13).

233. More common than all other pictures by which the Lord expresses the affectionateness of his heart is the picture, or likeness, of a father. As David says: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him." (Ps. ciii. 13). Think: a father! Of a father it is expected that he will in the most faithful way care for his children, yes, work for them, deny himself for them, and for them sacrifice strength, life, possessions, etc. Where all others tire and lose patience, there it is expected that a father will still hold out. "He is his father," — thus it is said of such a one in relation to the most unworthy and miserable fellow. Where any one has sinned, so that none will receive him into their homes, there often no other means is known than to take him to his father; for his father is expected to have an open door for him when all other doors are closed. Is any one found to be weak, sick, poor, and helpless, then such a one is soon asked, "Have you now no father?" To undertake the care of such a one, that is often not possible for a sympathizer, a friend, or a relative in general; but to help him to his father, -- well, to do that the one

or the other may be willing and ready; and that the father will provide for him when he has been brought to his home, that is assumed as altogether natural and as a matter of course. Is a servant worn out and unfit for service any longer, and can he no more work and provide for himself, — such a one is taken home to his or her father. In short: of a father the greatest and most beautiful things are expected, and no true father thinks it unreasonable that such things should be expected of him. Picture to yourself, therefore, a father as generous, as benign, as morally glorious, as your mind or your heart is capable of conceiving, and know that in that picture you have a faint, but true, likeness of God.

234. But in order that we may apprehend these things more clearly and more deeply, let us behold how he conducted himself, he who was and is "the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person." For in the works of the Son it is that you see the thoughts of the Father, the disposition of the Father, the heart of the Father. And behold now, in the Gospels, how the Lord conducts himself towards his disciples. The disciples were anything but perfect. At the very time that they through faith in him were true and real disciples, they again and again erred in their understanding, and sinned in their conduct. But look now how he deals with them, how he keeps company with them, how he rebukes them when they sin, how he comforts them and forgives them their sins, how he watches over them and guards them, how he teaches them, how he explains his parables to them, always in the same manner and degree unwearied in his patience, always just as ever willing to serve and help them. Behold, also, how he in the evening when he was to be separated from them gathers them around himself to a comforting meal, the Holy Supper; how he washes their feet and speaks endearingly to them, although he knows that in that very night they will be offended at

him; how he tells them that he is going away only to prepare a place for them in his Father's house, but that he will come again and receive them unto himself, in order that they may be with him forever in his glory. Behold, also, further, how he sets forth the sorrows and tribulations into which they would come after a while, but cheers and encourages them over against these coming troubles, and teaches them to consider it all like the work of a vine-dresser who purges the branches of his vines in order that they may bring forth more fruit. And afterwards, when he is risen from the dead,—behold how he seeks out the trembling disciples, here some on a lonely by-path, there others on the way to a country village, then others where they are gathered together within the closely shut doors of a house in the city; behold, also, how he shows them his hands and feet, yea, eats in their presence, etc., etc., all this in order that he might help them out of their sorrow, and help them to faith and peace again. How could he better than by such deeds explain our text in the psalm which says: "The secret [that is, the counsel, the friendship, the intimacy] of the LORD is with them that fear him"?

235. "I have called you friends," says the Lord to his disciples in John xv. 15. And is it characteristic of a friend to love him whose friend he is, what friend can we then find that is perfectly like this friend Jesus, who out of pure love humbled, or abased, himself, and, as was the will of the Father, entered into humanity, yea, entered into death, in order to deliver those who were in the power of death? Does it belong to a friend to like to be in the company of him whose friend he is, what friend is there then that can be compared with this friend Jesus, who is with his own, his friends, his people, "alway [literally, "all the days"], even unto the end of the world"? [See Matt. xxviii. 20; cf. margin, or note, in Revised Version]. Does it belong to a friend to speak of what he

knows to him whom he loves, who then is like this friend Jesus, who says: "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you"? (John xv. 15). Does it belong to a friend to be glad to be of service to him whose friend he is, who then can be compared with this Jesus, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. xx. 28), which he also yet does by daily caring for those who belong to him, raising them up when fallen, forgiving them, comforting them, chastening them, carrying them, and never growing weary of so doing? Does it belong to a friend to be trustworthy and faithful, who then can be compared with this Jesus, who has never failed, or deceived, any one of his friends, but has been their Saviour both when they have been in prosperity and when they have been in adversity, yea, has faithfully carried and carries one after another of them over the Jordan into the blessed, happy Canaan? Does it belong to a friend gladly to share everything with him whose friend he is, who then can be compared with this Jesus, who has shared much with us in our sin in order that he might give us to share more with himself in the glory he had with the Father before the world was? Yes, who is such a friend as our Lord Jesus?

236. But in the very clearest manner the affectionate intimacy of the Lord Jesus with his disciples is expressed when the Scriptures call him our Bridegroom. Have you seen a true, real bridegroom? Have you seen his joy over his bride? Well, then you have had a glimpse of the Lord Jesus. Have you seen how tender a true bridegroom is towards his bride, and how anxious he is about her well-being? Well, then you have had a glimpse of the Lord Jesus. Have you seen how open and frank a true bridegroom is towards his bride, how he considers all that is his as belonging equally to the bride, and how he much more likes to hear her say "our"? Well, then you have had a glimpse of the Lord

Jesus, the Bridegroom above all others. Have you seen how a true bridegroom always himself speaks well of his bride, covers and hides her faults, so that no one may see them, or know of them, and how desirous he is that all should think well of his bride, and look upon her as a crown among women? Well, then you have had a glimpse of the heart of this Bridegroom Jesus. In short: gather all whatspever charming, desirable, beautiful, and loveable you have ever seen in or heard of a friend, a brother, a mother, a father, a bridegroom, and of it all make yourself a picture, and know that even if you in your imagination add to this picture a thousand times more beauty and charm than you have been able to give it, then you are about beginning to get something of a picture of Jesus, of him who is yours, your own bridegroom, the lover of your soul. But, as has been said before, when you have that picture, then know that also your heavenly Father looks just like that.* No human tongue can express how entirely the Lord belongs to his own, his friends, his people. The most faithful bridegroom can become impatient, yea, wearied; but the Lord - never.

237. On the other hand, also, on the part of those who fear the Lord, there exists a cordial intimacy with him. This intimacy shows itself in this that they daily speak, and have need of speaking, with him about their sins and all their affairs besides. Look at David. Is he assailed or in danger of assault by enemies? Right away he speaks with the Lord about it. Is he glad? Right away he praises the Lord. Has he sinned? At once he must go to the Lord and confess it, and if he does not do so, why, he experiences such distress, that "his moisture is turned into the drought of summer." (Ps. xxxii. 4). In short: whatever happens to him, he always must share it with the Lord, or cast it all upon him. Just think how unlike such a disposition is that of the world! For worldly per-

^{*} See §§ 56, 82, 233, and 234. — J. G. P.

sons can have no joy when the Lord is near, or present. No, the first condition for their peace and joy is that they may be able to forget the Lord. Neither does their sin drive them to the Lord, for they love their sin, and therefore prefer to walk in darkness without and away from the Lord. If the light comes near them they flee or become imbittered and angry. And so they live without peace and without fellowship with the Lord, and finally go away as such as have no hope. "I never knew you," the Lord will say to them. Oh! surely, in view of all this, those must be extolled as blessed and happy who know God and him whom he has sent, Jesus Christ, and who have fellowship with him, and are in "the secret with him," that is, are intimate with him.

238. This intimacy of the faithful with the Lord is expressed, also, by the many glorious names by which the saints in the Holy Scriptures call and address the Lord. Thus says David: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength [or rather, my strong rock], in whom I will trust; my buckler [my shield], and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Ps. xviii. 1, 2). There he likens him to a fortress and a strong high tower, in which he is safely inclosed and kept from all enemies; then also to a strong rock, on which he stands secure from danger amid all storms; then also to a buckler, or shield, against which all the fiery darts and deadly thrusts of the enemy must recoil to the shame of those from whom they come; then also to a deliverer, whose office and work it is to preserve and rescue him from everything evil and dangerous, from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, etc. In Ps. xxvii. 1 he calls the Lord his light, his salvation, and the strength of his life. In short: anything that he sees to be good, beautiful, and comforting, that he lays hold of, makes of it a name, and gives that name to the Lord, thereby indicating that in

him he has all that that name implies. Just think how blessed, how happy, it is to live in such an intimate relationship with the Lord. The world calls it fanaticism, but O that it might taste that blessedness! For when one lives in such a state, then can one say with David: "I lay me down and sleep; I awake; for the LORD sustaineth me." (Ps. iii. 5*). And again: "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep: for thou, LORD, alone makest me dwell in safety." (Ps. iv. 8, Revised Version).

239. There is, however, in this matter a great deal of difference in Christians, in believers. True, they all have this mark in common, that they cannot do without the Lord; but their intimacy with the Lord is different, being greater or less in proportion to the greater or less degree of simplicity and faithfulness they manifest towards the grace given them. Some believers, more than others, live very fully, devotedly, and cordially with the Lord, so that almost every one who comes near them readily perceives a heavenly fragrance in their lives. A picture of such affectionate devotedness we see especially in John the Evangelist, who therefore calls himself simply "the disciple whom Jesus loved," as though he knew of himself nothing else than that Jesus loved him. For his heart was so filled and occupied by this love, that he, as it were, forgot everything else. Oh! it is a precious sight when one at times may see some soul that so completely lives in the Lord, that one cannot be near it without experiencing a wholesome influence from it. Other Christian believers are rather superficial, occupied mostly with outward things, distracted, careless in their conduct, having

^{*} The verbs in the passage I have given the present tense, in accordance with the Swedish and German Versions. As to grammatical grounds for thus translating, see my note to § 97, page 104. The English Revised Version has the present tense in "sustaineth" (the Hebrew verb is in the future). Cf. note to § 112, page 119. — J. G. P.

their minds quite taken up with all sorts of things belonging to this world. Hence it comes that their lives and intercourse are rather spiritless and sapless. They may, indeed, be very jocose and jesting and gossiping; but they are all that, and, besides, slubbering and careless in their ways, instead of being at all spiritually encouraging, or edifying. Such different states and conditions are evident to the eyes of all.

240. God grant that this matter may become very important to our hearts. For it is terrible what damage is done when those who are Christians begin to be negligent and heedless in their communion and intercourse with the Lord, in what our psalm calls "the secret of the LORD." Once early in an autumn I saw a tree which aroused my attention by the circumstance that, while the leaves on all the rest of its branches were yet green, there was one branch the leaves of which had already turned vellow. Examining it still more closely I found that the branch was very much broken just at the place of its connection with the trunk. The branch was, indeed, yet alive, for so much it was still connected with the trunk; but the blemish, or damage, which existed in, and had been done to, its union with the trunk, caused its appearing and its being much less beautifully green and fresh and alive than the rest of the branches. In like manner there can, indeed, be life in a Christian believer even amid many infirmities; but, oh! what a difference there is between the sanctified life which comes from intimacy with the Lord, and that sapless life, or state, or conduct, which comes from negligence and carelessness in communion and intercourse with the Lord. The first-mentioned kind of life is like a refreshing breeze from heaven for the edification of those who are around; the last-mentioned kind of life is like a biting cold wind which freezes and dries up the heart, so that one feels empty in spirit after having been in contact with such a one as leads that kind of life. Where such do not in time wake up from that state, then death, spiritual death, can easily get dominion over them. May God graciously keep and protect us.

241. Therefore, dear friends, since we have such a Saviour, who has so completely given himself to us and for us, who also is still always, "all the days," with us, not to be served, or ministered unto, but to serve and to minister, to care for, lead, guide, carry, reprove, chasten, comfort — all just as the one or the other thing is needed, - let us then wholly, heartily, and generously give ourselves to him. Let us then, as Paul says, "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. vi. 11), crucified unto the world, and belong only to him who is our brother, our own bridegroom. In this matter we all have sinned, so that we indeed have reason to smite our breasts. But if we see this, let us not stop at merely seeing it, but let us seek to get it remedied; let us repent, confess it all, and begin at once to do better. There is only one way of remedying what is here wanting and at fault, and that way is that we begin really to exercise more intimacy with the Lord. To brush over all with talk about free grace and with a gushing evangelicalness of the mouth, - that will not do at all. Oh, may God keep us away from such an abyss! To make good resolutions and exertions in our own strength, - that will not do any better. No; but to associate intimately with the Lord, to have friendly and familiar intercourse with him,—that will do, that will help the matter. For the more intimately we associate with him, the more will we partake of his mind and become like him, the more will we be devoted to him, and the more, also, will our lives and whole conduct be fragrant with the sanctifying odor of the gospel, to the praise of his holy name.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

"He will shew them his covenant."

242. Now, David goes further and says: "He Ithe LORD] will shew them [that is, them that fear him] his covenant," or, "his covenant is for them to know it."* Just as a friend speaks of all his secrets and his plans to his most intimate one, and opens to him the inmost secrets of his heart, so also the Lord instructs in his covenant them that fear him, and reveals to them the thoughts of his heart. Of this instruction it is said in Jer. xxxi. 34: "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD': for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD." And also in other passages, as: "They shall be all taught of God." (John vi. 45; Is. Liv. 13; xi. 9, and elsewhere). An ungodly person can indeed through studies acquire a kind of knowledge, or information, about the Lord and his covenant, and can impart to others this knowledge; but here the question is not as to such knowledge, but as to that living and intimate acquaintance which comes from the heart's experiencing and practically living in the matter itself. For as it is one thing to have, through

^{*} This last rendering agrees with the marginal reading, or note, in the Revised Version, which runs thus: "And his covenant (is) to make them know it." -J. G. P.

books, obtained a theoretical knowledge of one's being a sinner, and an entirely different thing to have, through the law of God, practically learned to know and feel one's own sins, so there is also a like essential difference between one's having acquired through studies a kind of information, or knowledge, or even conviction about Christ, and one's being through the gospel implanted into Christ, so that one can say, "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." (Gal. ii. 20, Revised Version). One who is deaf can indeed through studies learn how the ear is fashioned, and how sound comes into the ears; he can learn also to understand the diseases of the ear, yes, become very learned in all those matters; but amidst and during all this he still remains deaf as ever. Hearing he cannot get in that way. While, and at the same time, he is holding lectures or writing books about hearing, he himself does not perceive a single sound. Likewise, also an ungodly man can gain theological learning, hold lectures, and write and publish books on religious and spiritual subjects, while at the same time, however, he himself perceives and receives naught of the things of the spirit of God. (Cf. 1 Cor. ii. 14). Of the true spiritual knowledge — that is, real, intimate acquaintance with God — the Lord says: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John xvii. 3, R. V.). And this knowledge, this intimate acquaintance, which depends upon God's revealing himself to the soul by his Spirit, this only they have who fear the Lord, as we said above just a little while ago. However much others may study, and pass one examination after the other, and receive degree after degree, yet the veil will still remain over their eyes and hearts, according to the word of the Lord: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes." (Matt. xi. 25, Revised Version). Before they are converted they will not get rid of the veil. Of this we have spoken before in this book. [See §§ 28—31].

243. In the Scriptures different covenants are spoken of: some between man and man, some between God and man. Thus Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant. in which Abraham swore to Abimelech that he would not be hostile to [or, "not deal falsely with"] him or his children or his children's children, but that he would deal with him and his country according to the kindness which Abimelech had done unto him. (Gen. xxi. 23). Likewise, Isaac and Abimelech made a covenant, in which they swore that as Abimelech had done to Isaac nothing but good, and had let him go in peace, so should also Isaac do Abimelech no hurt. (Gen. xxvi. 29). Likewise, also "Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he (Jonathan) loved him (David) as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." (1 Sam. xviii. 3, 4). By such a covenant is meant an agreement between two parties, according to which they consent and stipulate to be friends, and to maintain peaceable relations to each others, and each to help the other wherever the one can help and the other needs his help.

244. In the same way the Scriptures speak of-covenants between God and individual human beings. Thus God made a covenant with Noah to preserve him and his children when all others should perish in the flood. (Gen. vi. 18). Also after the cessation of the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his sons, that no flood should ever afterwards destroy the earth. (Gen. ix. 9—11). In such covenants there could not, from the nature of the case, be any question of an agreement as to *mutual* help,

because God needs no help; but there God covenanted, or bound himself, to help, and minister to, and do good to them with whom he entered into covenant. They, on their part, — why, they covenanted, or bound themselves, only and simply to cleave to the Lord, to trust in him, and to expect the needed help from him.

245. All the covenants that now have been named, and others of the same nature, were of an individual character, and pertained only to material things and temporal blessings. But besides these the Scriptures speak of two other covenants, which are described as being of a general character and as having in view the salvation of human beings. These covenants are the most important. The first of these is that which God made with the people of Israel at Sinai when he gave them the law; the second is the new covenant established in Christ. Of the first it is said: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." (Ex. xix. 5). This covenant was a covenant of law [that is, one that was based on law, supported by law, and required compliance or punishment according to law], one in which the people were driven and constrained under laws and ordinances, as Paul says: "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." (Gal. iv. 3). This covenant of law had a twofold purpose, namely: in the first place, to separate Israel from all other people, in order to be educated and guarded as the people out of which the Christ should come; in the second place, to prepare, within and through that people, the general salvation for all men, partly by all the promises and the types which pointed forward to the coming Saviour, partly by the commandments and ordinances of the law which were to make sin known and felt, and thus thereby awaken a desire after the promised Saviour. Therefore, also, the law is likened: - 1st, to a guardian and steward under

whose power the son stood "until the term appointed of the father" (Gal. iv. 1, 2, Revised Version); — 2dly, to a prison, or ward, in which the people of Israel were kept and "shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Gal. iii. 23); — 3rdly, to a schoolmaster, or tutor, whose office it was to bring and lead the people to Christ (Gal. iii. 24). The entire covenant of the law was therefore a covenant which was valid only for a certain time, and existed only as an introduction to, or preparation for, another covenant, which was to come after, and with whose establishment the first must cease, as also history has fully shown. For the temple is destroyed, and the sacrifices have ceased, and with these the entire old covenant has come to an end. The people of Israel shall indeed, according to the promise, yet once again be gathered together, but the old covenant as such shall never come back, or be re-established.

above is the true covenant of salvation, for the sake of which the first one existed as a preparation; and this covenant the Lord God distinguishes from the covenant of the law, for instance, in this manner in Jer. xxxi. 31—34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them,* saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days [or, better, according to the Revised Version, the Swedish, and others,

^{*} Or, as the Revised Version has this clause in the margin, or as a note, "although I was lord over them," that is, lorded over them, or used force; which agrees with the rendering in the Old Swedish and the German Versions, according to which the clause runs thus: "and I had to force them." — J. G. P.

"with the house of Israel after those days", - thus connecting the phrace, "after those days," directly with the preceding, and not with the following words], saith the LORD. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD': for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Of this difference between the old and new covenants Paul speaks in 2 Cor. iiird, where he describes the office of the former covenant as the ministration of the letter, which kills by its administering, or preaching, condemnation, but the office of the new covenant, on the contrary, as the ministration of the spirit, which gives life by its administering, or preaching, righteousness. Of the same difference John the Evangelist speaks thus: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17).

247. From this we notice, as the principal difference between the two covenants, that in the old covenant the chief business was, by means of the law, to conclude, or shut up, all things under sin (see Gal. iii. 22, Revised Version), and to stop every mouth, and make all the world guilty before God [or, as the Revised Version has it, "bring all the world under the judgment of God." Rom. iii. 19]; while, on the contrary, in the new covenant the chief business is, by grace and by the truth of the gospel, to justify, to sanctify, and thus really to save sinners. In the Old Testament (or covenant), also, grace and gospel truth were indeed found; but grace and truth in their fulness were not found there. There grace and truth existed like the dawn of the morning, which consists of that light which the sun sends forth in advance of its rising; but "the Sun of righteousness" had not yet arisen "with heal-

ing in his wings" [that is, with salvation in his beams, rays. or light]. (Mal. iv. 2). Therefore we see, also, how the entire Old Testament looks forward, sighing and longing for "the consolation of Israel," just as one waits for the sun when the dawn of the morning is beheld. "Many prophets and kings," says the Lord to his disciples, "have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (Luke x. 24). And on another occasion he said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he should see my day." (John viii. 56, Revised Version, margin, or foot-note). Of Simeon, also, it is said that he was "waiting [or, looking] for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25); and of Anna it is narrated that she spoke of the child Jesus "to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38, Revised Version). That which in the New Testament is announced as already fulfilled, that was set forth in the Old Testament, in more or less obscure promises and types, as something to come in the course of time. What, therefore, we are now rejoicing over in faith, after that the ancients were reaching out in hope; ah, yes, at times they also rejoiced in a foretaste, or anticipation, thereof, oppressed and constrained as they otherwise were under all kinds of commandments and ordinances. A picture of their relation to the New Testament (or covenant) we have in our own relation to the coming glory. For as we now in hope stretch forward to and long for the eternal glory, yea, can even rejoice in the certainty of it, and in anticipation of it, while, however, we still are oppressed and straitened by all kinds of things which are hinderances to us; in the same way the ancients stretched forward in hope towards the redemption upon which we now look back in faith; yea, now and then they rejoiced in the foretaste thereof, though at the same time they were in bondage under outward ordinances, so that there was no

difference between them and bondservants, although they were heirs and lords of all. (See Gal. iv. 1—3). And in the same way as we now look back upon the redemption which they were looking for, in the same way shall we, too, once in heaven, look back upon that redemption towards which we ourselves are now yet reaching out in hope.

248. These two covenants are different, further, in this that they have different mediators and different sacrifices. A better covenant must have a better mediator and better sacrifices. By a "mediator," in this case, is meant a person who stands in "the middle" [latin medius, middle] as the means, or agent, through whom God carries on, executes, performs, and accomplishes his works. Thus Moses was the mediator of the old covenant (Gal. iii. 19, 20; Acts vii. 38), because he was the "middle" person, or "middle-man," through whom God gave his law to the people, and instituted the old covenant. And then, Christ is the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. vii. 6), because he is the person through whom God has instituted the new covenant for the salvation of sinners. And as Moses, so long as he lived, was the mediator through whom God dealt with the people under the covenant established by him; so, also, is the Lord Jesus the person through whom God continually deals with us under the new covenant established by him. Hence comes the frequent repetition, in the epistles of the apostles, of the expression, "through Jesus Christ." Through him it is that God seeks the lost, brings home the scattered and erring, and binds up the wounded; through him it is that he lets us know the mystery of his will; through him it is that he forgives sins; through him it is that he comforts the mourning, strengthens the weak, speaks good tidings to the poor, proclaims recovering of sight to the blind, and sets at liberty them that are bruised. Through him it is, also, that he at last brings us into the true, real Canaan, the eternal glory in heaven, just as he through Moses

brought the people of the old covenant to the earthly Canaan. The mediator of each covenant has received a Canaan into which he was and is to bring his covenant people. The mediator of the old covenant brought his people to the boundary of the earthly Canaan, but he himself was not permitted to enter; the mediator of the new covenant has already at the head of his people entered into the heavenly Canaan, and into it he is now engaged also in bringing all those whom the Father has given him. The ways may be many, long, and strange, as they also were to the people of Israel in the wilderness; but the promise is sure, and the mediator is trusty.

249. Concerning, further, the difference between the sacrifices of the old and new covenants the epistle to the Hebrews makes an instructive comparison. Of the sacrifices of the Old Testament it is distinctly said that they could not take away sins, and hence could not make those who offered them perfect, because "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Therefore, through these sacrifices there was effected simply a yearly reminding of sins. (See Heb. x. 1-4). Of the sacrifice of the New Testament, on the contrary, it is said: "Through his own blood he [Christ] entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. ix. 12, Revised Version). His sacrifice is truly and really a sacrifice which takes away sins, and by that one sacrifice, or offering, "he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14). Therefore it is said of the blood of this sacrifice that it "cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John i. 7). Of the saints in heaven whom John saw standing before the throne of the Lamb, also this is said, that they had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14). Yes, through that blood the children of God are really as clean from all sin as if they never had sinned. What the old covenant typified, but never could give, that the new

covenant has brought about and has brought forward, — to wit, a sacrifice which really takes away sins. And that sacrifice is Jesus. He is the Mediator; he is the Sacrifice; he is the High Priest in this covenant. He is all; in him God has comprised and summed up all things.

250. From this difference between the sacrifices of the two covenants it follows, further, that while the atoning sacrifices of the old covenant had to be repeated yearly, the sacrifice of the new covenant needs never to be repeated. No, that took place once for all. A means which avails at once, and avails completely, - such a means has never need of being repeated. If I am to wash away a spot from a garment by means of water, but the spot is not thereby thoroughly taken away, then I must repeat the washing; but if I find a means which takes away the spot at once, then the washing does not need to be repeated. It is the same also here: the sacrifices of the old covenant had to be constantly repeated because they never could take away sins; the sacrifice of the new covenant, on the contrary, does really take away sins, and therefore it never needs to be made again. But as it never needs to be repeated, so also it never needs to be improved or completed or seconded by our works. No; in the offering of this one sacrifice the people of the new covenant are perfected forever without any works at all. The sacrifices which God now desires of us are, first and foremost, "a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart" (Ps. Li. 17), that is, such a spirit, or heart, as acknowledges its sin, leaves alone and lets go all self-righteousness and boasting, and desires grace; further, a holy and devoted life to the glory of him who has prepared for us such a redemption, as our Lord says: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16). Of this last mentioned kind of sacrifice also Paul says: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service [or, spiritual worship]. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" [or, "that ye may prove what is the will of God, even the thing which is good, and acceptable, and perfect"]. (Rom. xii. 1, 2). To offer works in order to attain grace, and become righteous,—that is a futile business, by which one always remains in sin and under the condemnation of the law. No; the sacrifice which had to do with the cleansing of the sinner from sin, that sacrifice was in Old Testament times, and is equally so in New Testament times, the right of the high priest to offer, and his right alone. But that you, when you believe in Jesus, and by faith in his blood are righteous and clean from all your sins,—that you then present, or devote, your body, your powers, your gifts, and your possessions to the honor of his name, and to the service of your neighbor, that is a sacrifice, or offering, which is always pleasing to him, and which he, therefore, always desires of those whom he by the blood of his covenant has brought up "out of the pit wherein is no water." (See Zech. ix. 11; Ps. xL. 2).

251. These two covenants were already about four hundred years before the time of Moses foreshadowed and typified in the history of Abraham. Concerning the covenant of the law Paul says in Gal. iv. 22—25: "It is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman..... Which things are [contain] an allegory: for these [women] are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to [or, beareth children unto] bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Concerning the covenant of grace, on the contrary, the same Paul says in Gal. iii. 15 and 16: "Brethren,

I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth [or, maketh it void], or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, 'And to seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'And to thy seed,' which is Christ." Yes, so surely did the ancients see in the covenant of God with Abraham a prefiguration of the new covenant, that, for instance, Zacharias, full of the Holy Spirit, sings in the first chapter of Luke the praise of God because he, God, had raised up in the house of David a saviour, "to remember," says the singer, "his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham." (Luke i. 67-73). In Rom. ivth Paul also founds all the teaching of the new covenant concerning justification by faith just on the example of Abraham, who "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (verse 3). Yes, there he also shows that the original significance of circumcision was that it constituted "a seal of the righteousness of faith" (verse 11). In Gal. iiird the same apostle shows, also, just by the history of Abraham, that the covenant of grace stretched its roots four hundred and thirty years farther back in time than the covenant of the law, and that the covenant of the law was "added", or instituted, "because of transgressions, till the seed should come" (verses 17 and 19), that is, until the time should come to which the covenant made with Abraham had reference when God said: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families and nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 3; xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 8).

252. Of this covenant of grace it is that also David here in the psalm speaks when he says that "the LORD will show them that fear him his covenant," or, "cause them to know," or, "let them know," "his covenant." Indeed often during the time of the old covenant the Lord allowed, according to what has been said above, his saints

to see in spirit, as at a short distance, or as if very near, the coming glory of the new covenant. Of this the Lord Jesus says: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John viii. 56). Just in the same way the Lord even now permits us, too, who live in the new covenant, by faith so to behold the same coming glory of this covenant as we never would be able to behold or comprehend it by our simple natural understanding. Such a beholding, such an experience, no man can teach another, as we have before shown. For even if one gains through books and the hearing of sermons or lectures a kind of knowledge about this, still one does not know anything as one ought to know. One knows, and knows; and still one continues at heart a stranger to that which the head knows, until the Lord reveals it. As our Lord says: "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." (Matt. xi. 27, Revised Version). But he reveals this only "unto babes," that is, the childlike, simple, humble, such as from the heart acknowledge their ignorance and blindness, and in their spiritual darkness turn to him. Of this the history of the kingdom of God bears witness from all times. While the high priests, scribes, and Pharisees remained in their spiritual darkness, the mystery of the gospel was revealed to many simple fishermen, publicans, and others like these. For they acknowledged their blindness, and prayed to God for light, while the former thought that they had light enough by having what they had. Therefore our Lord also says: "The poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matt. xi. 5). For although it is preached to all, it is, however, only the poor in spirit who apprehend, or receive, it. The others think that they, too, clearly apprehend it all, — and yet remain in darkness. This is seen also in these scribes [the theologically learned] themselves as soon as any one of them begins to be

anxious about his soul. Then his learning does not help him at all, but he must begin as if he had not learned anything; yes, he must begin to learn even of such simple persons as they are whose high teacher he long thought himself to be.

253. Of this covenant it is said, as we have above mentioned, that it is a covenant of grace. Concerning this John says: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John i. 17). It belongs, therefore, just to the fundamental nature of this covenant, that under it sinners shall not be dealt with according to their deserts, or demerit. "If it is by grace," says Paul, "then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6). No; it is not even of grace and works together, but all of pure grace without anything that can be called merit, or good work. Therefore it is said: "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Ps. Ciii. 11, 12). And again: "Thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." (Ps. cviii. 4). As we in the body cannot come to a place where the clouds, or skies, do not stretch out over us, or where we are not surrounded by the expanse of heaven; and as we can never climb so high, that we will not still have heaven above us; just so are they who live in this covenant, the true Israel, they who believe in Jesus, surrounded by such a grace as is greater and mightier than all their sins, and everywhere, in all circumstances, and at all times encompasses them as a high and glorious heaven which has neither boundary nor end. Should you therefore fear that grace has come to an end, then look up to the vault of heaven; when you no longer have the vault of heaven above your head, then grace has come to an end, but not before. As long as you still must say that the vault of heaven stretches infinitely high above your head and above all works of

man, so long must you let it stand that grace reaches infinitely high above all your works and sins. For just the fundamental trait itself of the covenant under consideration is called and is grace. Yes, the Lord likens, also, this covenant to a betrothal, or a marriage covenant, saying: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me..... in lovingkindness [or, grace], and in mercies." (Hos. ii. 19). As where a man takes to himself a wife he takes her for the whole of life with all that is hers, be it good or bad, be it possessions or debts, be it virtues and excellencies or faults and weaknesses, thus also has the Lord in this covenant betrothed himself to us, taking us, through faith on our part, out of pure grace on his part, to be his bride forever, — unworthy, poor, miserable though we be. He has not entered into a partnership with us, in which each party possesses his or her own share, but a covenant of marriage, in which the one owns all that the other owns, and that forever and ever.

254. This also was typified in the covenant with Abraham. For when God had made that covenant he gave to Abraham the sign of circumcision, saying: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee..... And my covenant (that is, the mark of my covenant, to wit: circumcision) shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant." (Gen. xvii. 7, 13). As men put a mark on their property, by which mark that particular property may be distinguished from the property of all others, so circumcision was to be such a mark by which Abraham and his seed were to be distinguished from all other peoples, or nations, as the people belonging especially to the Lord. Such a mark also the people of the new covenant have, which mark is the holy baptism, which was typified by the circumcision; wherefore in Col. ii. 11 baptism is called "the circumcision of Christ." Yes, baptism is

so to speak, God's engagement ring, in which his dear name is engraved as a sign, or mark, that the people of the new covenant belong to him, — to him, and to no one else.

255. Of this covenant it is further said that it is a covenant of peace; as the Lord says: "I will make with them a covenant of peace." (Ezek. xxxiv. 25). All peace is founded upon righteousness, and this is true as well in relations among men with one another as also in the relations between God and men. As soon as Adam and Eve had become unrighteous they were without peace, which condition showed itself in their hiding themselves from God. The same lack of peace is the condition which also now causes the whole world to hide itself from the Lord. Some tremble before him, or at his presence; others despise him; others deny him; but all are wandering away from him; and the cause of it all is the want of peace, which comes from their not being righteous before him. "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked." (Is. XLviii. 22; Lvii. 21). The sinner cannot otherwise be restored to peace with God and blessedness in him than by this, that he be justified - he, the sinner, becoming righteous. Therefore we see, also, how all of God's work of salvation aims at justifying and cleansing us from sin; to this it all tends. The entire gospel turns upon that most important of all questions: how a sinner shall become righteous before God. For on that matter, on becoming righteous, eternal life depends. And the gospel, as Paul declares in Rom. i. 16 and 17, proves itself a power unto salvation just by this, that in it righteousness before God is revealed, or set forth, as a righteousness and justification by faith. In 2 Cor. iiird, also, the apostle sets it forth as the essence and glory of the new covenant that it is "the ministration of righteousness" (verse 9), that is, that it ministers to, or preaches, righteousness. But where there is righteousness, there is peace;

as the prophet says: "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance [confidence] for ever." (Is. xxxii. 17). Therefore, also, the covenant which justifies sinners, that is, makes them righteous, — that covenant is a covenant of peace.

256. Of this covenant of peace it is said, further, that it is immovable. As surely as blessedness is lost by sin, so surely is condemnation, so to speak, lost by the righteousness which the people of the covenant of grace have through faith in the blood of Jesus. "For," as the Lord says, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace [or, better, "my covenant of peace"] be removed." (Is. Liv. 10). "My peace I give unto you," says the Lord Jesus. (John xiv. 27). Whether more or less vividly the children of God experience and enjoy this peace in their feelings, - that does not matter, for still the covenant of peace stands sure. They need never fear that the covenant of peace shall fall or fail or change because they daily are aware of sin in their members. For since grace abounds and reigns over all their sins, and the covenant of peace is founded on grace, so it stands in spite of their sins, just as sure as a house stands when the children in it happen to slip and fall. True, their sins bring this with them. that they are visited with the rod and with stripes (see Ps. Lxxxix. 32), just as children in a home are chastised when they sin; but at the same time that they are thus chastised, both in part inwardly in the conscience, and also in part outwardly through various kinds of trouble, grace and the covenant of peace still stand fast without the least change. Yes, so entirely out of all question of effecting any change in the covenant of peace is such chastening, that it rather aims at the keeping of the sinning child in the covenant of peace, and constitutes real evidence

of this that the Lord still considers and acknowledges him as his child, and has "thoughts of peace" towards him (see Jer. xxix. 11); as the apostle says: "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons..... Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 7, 8, 11). Such things, also, the children of God ought diligently to study and believe. For the more they give heed to these matters the greater assurance and confidence in God will they enjoy in their hearts, the better will they understand his rule and guidance, the more intimately and frankly will they have converse and communion with him, and the more strengthened will they become to walk in his fear.

257. Finally it is said of the nature of this covenant: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." (Jer. xxxi. 33). How this makes itself known and manifest we see, for instance, in Ps. cxix., where among other things it is said: "I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved"; and, "My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved"; and again, "My portion [that is, treasure, happy lot], O LORD, I have said, is to keep thy words."* (Verses 47, 48, 57). Such a disposition of delight in the law of God cannot be produced in any other way than by one's being justified without the help of the law. The

^{*} Thus verse 57 ought to be translated as rather more correctly according with the Hebrew, and better agreeing with the preceding stanza; so also Dr. J. A. Alexander. All the Swedish Versions and Luther's German Version translate that way, substantially; thus, quoting both verses, 56 and 57: "It is my treasure that I keep thy precepts. I have said: LORD it shall be my inheritance that I keep thy ways" [later versions have more correctly: "words"]. — J. G. P.

threatenings and judgments of the law can effect that I from fear of hell or the wrath of God, may in outward things and in a superficial manner do what God commands; but to change the heart, so that the commandments of God will be lovely and delightful to it, that the law can never do. But, on the other hand, as soon as the heart, through grace, and the forgiveness of sins, has found peace with God, immediately it is inclined to the law of God, so that one gladly does all that God wills, yea, so that it now becomes a doleful and bitter matter to observe how in all things one comes short, and cannot walk, or live, in such a perfect way as one ought to do and would do. This is also so characteristic of all true Christians, that even the world sees by this that they no longer belong to it. Besides, it is known to all how that, as soon as a person comes to Christ and believes in him, the world then at once turns its eyes upon that person's life, and expects and demands that he or she now live differently and better than others; by which it makes it evident that it knows that faith in Jesus works a new disposition and life. But if it sees in those who profess the faith such works which, however, it most vehemently excuses and defends when they are done by it, then it holds them to be mere hypocrites; by which it again shows that it knows that it belongs to the children of the new covenant not to walk in the same works of darkness in which it, the world itself, is walking.

258. This much has now briefly been spoken of the new covenant. May the Lord in his grace reveal also to our hearts its glory. And he will do so if we only remain quiet before him. The more we fear him the more will he let us look down into the depths of this covenant; and the more we look into its depths the more empowered will we be to forsake the world, and with joy run the race that is set before us, until there will be no more race to run, and no more sin to beset us, and no more tears to shed,

but only pure pleasures at the right hand of God for evermore. Oh! that we were there. But these pleasures and the time for enjoying them are coming, they are coming; for the promise is sure, the Mediator is trusty, and the sacrifice is perfect.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

"Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD."

259. What now remains of the xxvth Psalm is composed, for the most part, of repetitions of things that have been said in the preceding verses. We can, therefore, be more brief in our meditations on these succeeding verses. Now, David says here: "Mine eyes are ever toward the **LORD.**" (Verse 15). By these words he expresses the same idea which in verse 5 he expressed thus: "On thee do I wait all the day." This is the last and only course for the poor, lowly, afflicted soul to take. When all one's own power is gone, and all help from man is vain, then only one thing remains: namely, to look to the Lord, to refer the whole matter to him, and from him alone to expect help. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary," says the prophet, "and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." (Is. XL. 30, 31). Before they have spent some considerable time in God's kingdom of grace young converts usually think quite highly of their own power and understanding. But the longer they continue and progress the nearer do they come to that prayer of Jehoshaphat, "We have no might....; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chr. xx. 12); and to that strange boasting, or glorying, of Paul, "Most gladly therefore will I

rather glory in my infirmities [weaknesses], that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. xii. 9). Verily, when a person learns really to know the deep corruption of his heart, to perceive his spiritual darkness, and to realize his fearful unfitness, or incapacity; when one comes to see how infinitely little one really can do and accomplish, and how the devil storms, and raves, and rends asunder the church of God, and how, in general, one can do nothing or almost nothing to prevent wrong being done or remedy the wrong already done; — then it is and will be good, oh! so good, to commit oneself and all things to the Lord, and to say something like this: "Lord, thou seest it all; thou hast promised to carry and help and lead me and all thy little flock; we can accomplish nothing. Our eyes are toward thee alone."

260. From these words of David we may, therefore, learn first this, that we ought not to be astonished if we here or there come into darkness and straits where we are made to feel completely unfit and incapacitated for anything. All the saints of God have had to travel along this way, so that it is nothing at all new, or strange, that is happening to us when we, too, must trudge along the same. O how nice and delightful it would be to understand all things, and to know all the deep things of God, so that we could answer all the cunning questions of the devil and every troublesome "why," or "wherefore," which arises in the heart! How nice and delightful it would be to have power to do all things, so that we never would be weak, but could do all that we according to the spirit would do! But now — it does not go that way. We may break our body to pieces, - yet, there we stand after all; oh, it is bitter to come short in everything! The heart would at times burst asunder; but what can we really accomplish? Nothing - absolutely nothing. And if you do not believe it, then just try to help yourself in all things, but know that the end will be this: "Even the youths shall

faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." (Is. xl. 30). There is nothing which a Christian must so often experience, but which he, nevertheless, with such difficulty believes, as that he is fit for, and able to do, nothing, so that all he may possibly do must be out of pure grace, and must be a gift from the Lord. To learn that, why, that costs many a fall and many tears, as the example of the apostle Peter shows. With the mouth it is easily said, "I am fit for nothing," or, "I can do nothing," but to say it with and from the heart, — that is a different thing.

261. The second lesson which we are to learn from the words of David is this, that we ought nevertheless not to despair, although we see that we can accomplish nothing. It is a curious part of our nature, that as soon as there is a matter which we do not understand, then it appears to us so troublesome and hopeless as though God, neither, could understand it; and, likewise, as soon as there is a matter in which or for which we can do nothing, and out of which we see no way, then again it appears to our hearts so sad and troublesome as though God, neither, could do anything, or find any way, or means, to act. This part, or characteristic, of our nature is a fruit of that idea which the devil insinuated into our first parents in paradise: "Ye shall be as God." (Gen. iii. 5. Revised Version). For what else is this than to make oneself like God when one thinks, "What I cannot understand or do, that neither God can understand or do"? Behold, this selfdeification — that is what brings upon us most of our sufferings. For if only, at heart, we held it certain that we are dust; if, also, at heart, we held it certain that where our own power and our own understanding fail us, there the Lord is still mighty above all that we can think: -- verily, then we would not have many bitter moments. We would then be and act as children, who are characterized just by this certain and happy confidence in their parents which makes their lives so free from all anxiety.

- 262. Therefore, also, the Lord desires, through all the difficulties, the temptations, and the dark straits, into which he permits us to come, to imprint this disposition in us, that we, on the one hand, do not expect anything of our understanding or of our strength or of other people, and that we, on the other hand, never despair nor even doubt, or distrust, him, but that we always should know, as by the far most settled thing in the world, that he is not at all anxious nor distressed nor uncertain about the issue, but that he has already determined all according to his good pleasure, and that he beyond all question will carry it on to victory according to his purpose. Therefore Peter says: "Cast all your care [anxiety] upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Pet. v. 7). Whatever may happen to you commit it to the Lord; keep your eyes upon him; be confident in him; and some day hereafter you will with David confess: "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed for, "they that look unto him shall be enlightened: and their faces shall never be confounded"]. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." (Ps. xxxiv. 4-6).
- 263. But David adds here in the psalm upon which we are meditating: "Forhe [the LORD] shall pluck my feet out of the net," that is, he will deliver me out of all the nets and snares which the enemies place in my way. Thus also in Ps. xci.it is said: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." In Ps. cxxiv. the psalmist exults, saying: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." This same promise concerns also all who believe in the Lord Jesus: nothing is to ensnare or destroy them; the devil may try what means or what snares he wishes to try, nevertheless the Lord will always watch over his own,

and pluck their feet out of the net; as in the Scriptures besides it is said: "He [the LORD] will keep the feet of his saints." (1 Sam. ii. 9). And again: "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. xci. 11, 12). And again: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber." (Ps. Cxxi. 3). Yes, so particular is he in this matter, that he has even numbered all the hairs of their head, so that not one shall fall off without his will. "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands," he says. (Is. xLix. 16). And on his word we can rest altogether safe. Therefore David says: "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep: for thou, LORD, alone makest me dwell in safety." (Ps. iv. 8, Rev. Ver.). If it depended on our own understanding and our own power, then we could never be safe, for we do not see one thousandth part of the snares of the devil; but the Lord Jesus sees them, and he goes before and tears them to pieces in our way, and if a foot of ours has got fast here or there he loosens it again, washes it, and heals it. For to do so he has received commandment of his Father.

264. Now David goes further and says (in verse 16): "Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me [or, more literally, "be gracious unto me"]; for I am desolate and afflicted" [or, "alone (lonely) and poor am I"*]. Is it not a wonderful trait of the Psalms of David: complaint and confident assurance intermingle there, the one often coming right after the other. Just before, in this psalm, he has said such comforting things about the goodness and uprightness [righteousness, kindness] of God, that one would believe that his heart was always full of an undisturbed joy in God. But no; immediately after he

^{*} The Hebrew word for "afflicted" is the same as in verse 9 is translated "meek"; properly, lowly, poor, distressed, helpless. See my notes to §§ 17 and 101, pages 22 and 108.— J. G. P.

has spoken of the covenant of God, etc., he breaks forth in complaints that he feels himself wretched ["afflicted," poor, helpless]; yea, that the troubles of his heart are great on account of his sins, as he directly after says: "The troubles of my heart are enlarged for "have been enlarged," therefore are large]: 0 bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction [lowliness, wretchedness, helplessness] and my pain; and forgive all my sins." (Verses 17 and 18). Such things we never could understand unless we realized them in our own experience, and thus lived through them. But where one lives in the Lord, there it goes on just in that way: according to faith one thing, according to feeling another thing; according to faith all is confidence and boldness; according to feeling all is distress and complaint. For look yet once more at the wonderful example we have here. Just little before he speaks of the secret (or intimacy) of God with them that fear him, and straightway after he complains that he feels "desolate," that is, lonely and forsaken, as if God had turned his face away from him. A little before he says that "all the paths of the LORD are grace and truth"; and now he says: "The troubles of my heart are enlarged" [or, "are great"]. Think how strange!

265. What we learn from this is, principally, that the life of the Christian must ever be an exercising of faith, without sight, and that in all things. The Lord always deals strangely with his own. He gives them the word, and says: "Believe that." Afterwards he permits things to go on in such a way, that it seems as if the word were altogether to come to naught. The entire kingdom of God is such a wonderful kingdom. Just think, for instance, when he had caused David to be anointed king, then straightway after he allowed him to come into such trouble and deadly peril, that it looked as if he had simply wished to mock him by that anointing. There, surely, it was all a matter of believing without seeing. — A still

more remarkable instance is John the Baptist. After God had by an angel, before his birth, prophesied the most glorious things concerning him, then he allowed him scarcely to begin his ministry before he was seized, cast into prison, and finally had to leave his head as a reward to a frivolous woman who had danced so as to please the wicked king Herod. In the mean time Jesus of Nazareth was going about, there in the land, with power to still the storm and the sea, with power to command legions of angels, with power, by only uttering a word, to heal the sick and to awaken the dead and to perform other miracles of the mightiest kind, — he went about there, and testified that John was the greatest among all them that are born of women; but not a hand or foot did he stir to set John free, while in other cases he used to go long distances in order to help quite insignificant persons. Surely, there, too, it was a matter of believing without seeing.

266. The same thing is seen also in the history and experience of the Lord Jesus himself. Just think what a peculiar contradiction between the word and the appearances it must have been to his own disciples when, on the one hand, they heard from the word the greatest things of Christ, but, on the other hand, there appeared to their eyes only the deepest meanness of circumstances. There from the word they heard that he was to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever," and that "of his kingdom there should be no end"; there they heard that he was the only begotten Son of God, the man who was to "save his people from their sins," etc. In the beginning, indeed, it went well and looked quite bright, as when he began to preach and work miracles and was "glorified [or, praised] of all." (Luke iv. 15). But time went on, and nothing but lowness, or an abject state of things, would seem to come of it all. At last he gathers them to a paschal supper, during which he tells them that he was going away to prepare for them a place in the mansions of the Father's house,

and that afterwards he would come again and take them to himself, etc. There and then they could begin to think, "Now it is coming." But in a few hours he is seized, led away, scourged, and crucified; and there at last he hangs upon the accursed tree amid the exultations of his enemies. Could now this one be he to whom all the Old Testament by all its prophecies and sacrifices and other types and pictures had referred? Could be be the one who was called Wonder ful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace? (Is. ix. 6). Could this one be he who should redeem Israel? (Luke xxiv. 21). Impossible! There had hitherto not appeared a glimpse of that redemption, and the man who was to accomplish the redemption hung now upon the cross. Impossible, impossible! all reason must say. And still it was he, and he was the one. Yes, just then, when all seemed lost, just then he laid the corner stone and foundation of his kingdom upon earth. Thus wonderful is the kingdom of God. There the disciples ought to have believed without seeing, but faith forsook them at that time. Yet the word was fulfilled.

267. In a greater or less degree the same thing still happens to us who believe in the Lord Jesus, namely this that we must believe one thing, and see another thing. Just think, for instance, when it appears to me that the ungodly rule, and have the power, and that evil and falsehood and ungodliness are getting the upper hand, while, however, out of the word I hear that it is God who rules and will forever come off victorious, -- why, then, is there much likeness between what I see and what I hear? But what's to be done? Shall I convict the word of falsehood? God forbid. But if I would cleave to the word, then I must convict my own eyes of fault and error. That will go hard, for by nature one does not believe that there is any fault, or error, in one's own eyes. But a great art and exercise of faith it will be, any way, to hold fast to the word, and to let all else go. Even if it seems as though

all were lost, still the victory belongs to the Lord and to his Anointed.

268. However, in a general way to believe that God has all power, that he rules, and that he finally will get the victory, this I may do easily enough; but to believe this so that I apply it to myself, so that for my own part I rest secure in it, and am certain that he rules me, too, and all that is mine and concerns me, and that he cares for me in all respects, and this not only in the bright moments and places, but also in the very darkest valleys where it looks as though I was entirely forsaken, - thus to believe is infinitely harder. That he upholds worlds innumerable, that he upholds the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all things, — that I can measurably well believe. But that he, though I myself see no ways and means, still should be able to give me the daily bread which I and mine need for our subsistence, - that is almost impossible to believe. That he clothes the lilies, and feeds the birds, — that I see, and that I believe. But that he has and will have the same care for me when all outward stays and supports are taken from me, — oh, that will not take hold in the heart! Yes, ten dollars in the drawer often make the heart more confident than ten promises of God, and that though one has never heard of a single instance where the Lord has broken any promise of his. Indeed this is dreadful. But such is nature; and it is the exercise and art of faith to overcome nature in this respect, and to keep hold of the word, so that the heart, in spite of all contradictions, shall still rest in it.

269. But if even in the domain of temporal and material things it is important for the children of God to believe and not see; equally important, yes, much more important, is this in the domain of spiritual things. Just think when I in all my being feel sin and uncleanness, but the word tells me that before God I am clean and free from all my sin, and that not through any work of my

own, but only through the blood which has flowed from the cross of the Lord Jesus, yes, that that blood daily cleanses me from all my transgression; then there is no likeness between that which is seen and felt, on the one hand, and that which the word says, on the other hand. If I am there to keep hold of what I see and feel, then I must despair. But then just there it is the exercise and art of faith that I overcome merely seeming things, and that I let alone all disputing about works and qualifications, and that I in all simplicity read the word just as it is written, and say to my heart: "Look here, you are an old liar, skilled in the art of deceiving; but here you see something that is true and sure, to wit: that my Lord Iesus has in his blood made me clean from all my sins; you may therefore say what you please, yet facts will remain as here written, for the Lord cannot lie." For the art of faith is nothing else than this, that I read as it is written, and let the words mean for my heart just what they say and nothing else. Just as when a father assures his child of something, and the child believes and trusts in the father's word, and does not allow itself to be shaken off from that word, whatever others may say, just so this is simple childlike faith that when God in his word says, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," I then trust it so that I give God thanks, even if all my reason cries out against it and the anguish of my heart does not at once yield. For say what we will, matters and things will any way remain just as the word of God says.

270. By nature we usually think that faith must be some very peculiar and difficult work or qualification or disposition which we must do or have if we at all shall be allowed to take to ourselves, and trust in, that which God in his word says, as something that really concerns and applies to us. Therefore we constantly hear troubled souls meeting the preaching of the gospel with this objection: "Very well; but I must have faith, otherwise all

this does not apply to, or concern, me." Then they ask, "How shall I get, or attain to, faith?" - imagining that faith is a kind of treasure which lies somewhere afar off, and to which they must first fight their way through a true conversion, etc. But that is an entirely false notion. For faith is simply this that you as a sinner artlessly and frankly lean upon the Lord Jesus, and appropriate to yourself, for your own heart and use, that which the gospel says of him. When therefore the Lord says, "Believe," then this is not a commandment of law about a kind of work which you must do if he is to be gracious to you. But just as when a rich man holds out a gift to a poor man, and says, "Take this," and the poor man then does not understand these words as a commandment of law, but as a grace, a gospel, that he is even invited and asked to take what is held out to him; just so this is faith, that, when the Lord sends you the gospel, and says, "Jesus is the Saviour of sinners, believe in him," you then take what is thus offered and given to you, and in all simplicity place the confidence of your heart in him, even if you in your own heart perceive nothing but sin and distress.

271. Thus it must go on, throughout the whole of life, that even though I look upon myself as chief among sinners, yes, even though I daily sin in many ways, I still according to the word will go about and trust in Jesus Christ, and know, and hold fast to it, that I am a child of God and his elect saint through him. It cannot be otherwise here in this life than that I must be burdened with the flesh, which is unclean and full of coldness, unbelief, and all possible kinds of evil desires. In one person a certain evil desire and temptation may indeed be more prominent, in another person another desire and temptation; one leans more towards covetousness, another more towards pride, a third one more towards unchastity; but amidst all this there is in them all the one and the same nature. Of this Luther says: "I and many others would

gladly be without sin; but this cannot be, though we are engaged in subduing it. When we chance to fall into sin, then indeed we rise up again; but in the meanwhile we are plagued and tormented by it. Thus the kingdom of Christ is situated in the midst of sins. No one need blush to pray: 'Forgive us our sins.' No holy person on earth denies his or her being beset by sins, but all acknowledge and confess it; and it does heartily pain them that they must be burdened with this miserable flesh."

272. Yes, what will we say when not only Luther tnus speaks, but also Paul complains: "That which I do I know not [that is, I know not what I am doing, I do not understand myself]: for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? [Or, "out of this body of death?"] I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." (Rom. vii. 15-24, Rev. Ver.). In 2 Cor. xiith he says, also, that the Lord had given him a "thorn [or, stake] in the flesh, a messenger of satan," who was to buffet him. Concerning that thing he prayed three times that he might get rid of it; but the Lord answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee." These are bitter experiences, but what can we do about them? My flesh will, any way, never become spiritual, but will always lust and war against the Spirit. (See Gal. v. 17). If I would break my body to pieces, still I cannot change it. Therefore there is here nothing else to do than to believe, only believe, stubbornly and persistently to cling to the word about Jesus and about the blood which cleanses from all sins. And if at times it seems so unreasonable, that I am ready to cast away all confidence and comfort, still nothing else will here avail than to hold on and hold fast, as a drowning man who rather lets his hands be cut off than

he lets go his hold of what he has grasped. Believing without seeing — that is the rule for the life of the children of God; and they that do so are "blessed," says the Lord (in John xx. 29), even though the experience of it tastes bitter.

273. But as it is necessary in life to believe without seeing, so it is necessary, further, to do likewise in the case of death. For there, especially, the word will not seem to harmonize with what the eyes behold. Why, there all appears indeed as if it were only a question of becoming nothing, of total annihilation. There the powers gradually wane and fail; finally life flies, as when the works of a clock stop, or a light burns down and goes out; afterwards the body begins to change and decompose, and we carry it away, and bury it in the ground in order to let it molder and become earth again. This is all that appears to the eyes. But here now comes the word, and calls this all "departing in peace," "falling asleep," "going away to rest for a little season," "departing to be with Christ", etc. Then it gives also this information, that out of the body laid away in the ground there shall one day arise another, a new body, holy, clean, spiritual, and like the glorified body of the Lord Jesus. Just think what enormous contradictions here appear! Am I now to follow my eyes simply, then I must despair; but let me by faith look at the word, then I can sing of victory, and with the apostle break forth: "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. i. 21). Yes, indeed, "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." Why, there are thousands upon thousands of all sorts of people and nations and tongues who by faith have passed and are yet, incessantly, day after day, passing hence with that song of triumph in their hearts and upon their lips.

274. Thus may this text teach us to abide constantly with the Lord in all need, in all distress, in all difficulties, and not give up, and not despair, but know that this

or that matter is as it is written about it in the word, and not as it appears to our eyes. At all events, and any way, there is "but labour and sorrow" in and as a result of this life, even at its best. (See Ps. xc. 10, Revised Version). Therefore we must let all things simply cause us to forget the things which are behind, and to stretch forward to the things which are before and above (see Phil. iii. 13 and Col. iii. 1), pressing on and hastening toward the goal, the happy haven of peace and rest, where we shall no more see and feel one thing and believe another, but where even faith shall vanish away, and we shall see the Lord as he is. But while this tarries, and we, too, are tarrying. let us have patience. To us nothing different is happening than what has happened to all the saints of God. Let us keep on believing, simply and artlessly believing, persistently and stubbornly believing what God says, whether we in our feelings taste and enjoy of it more or less or naught at all. The word is, notwithstanding, all the same and always equally sure.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION

"Consider mine enemies, for they are many."

275. After David had spoken to the Lord about his distress on account of his sins, and had prayed for their forgiveness, he continues and says: "Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred." (Verse 19). In the Psalms he often, indeed, complains of his enemies. Thus he says in Ps. iii. 1 and 2: "LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of [or, to] my soul, 'There is no help for him in God.'" Also in Ps. vii. 1 and 2 he prays: "O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me. and deliver me: Lest he [Cush, one of the persecutors] tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver." In Ps. xxxviii. 19 and 20 he complains: "Mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is." Also in Ps. xiiith he cries out: "How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul [torture my soul in trying to form plans for bettering my condition], having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, O LORD my

God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death; lest mine enemy say, 'I have prevailed against him;' *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved" [or, fallen].

276. David has, therefore, had to experience the same which all the children of God from the beginning to the end must live through. For wherever any one becomes a child of God, and begins to witness of the Lord and against the world, there such a one must at once prepare himself for suffering. "I believed," says David in another place, "therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted" [that is, because I spoke what I believed I was greatly afflicted by opponents]. (Ps. cxvi. 10). The prophets of the Old Testament had to lose their lives, the one after the other, on account of their testimony. Christ, also, brought on a fearful hatred against himself through his preaching of the gospel. His disciples, too, he had, in this respect, nothing better to promise than that the time would come when whosoever might kill them would think he should thereby be doing God service. (John xvi. 2). How this has been fulfilled the history of the church bears witness. They number millions who have been obliged to sacrifice their lives on account of the testimony of Jesus.

277. Such things are indeed very strange. For considering what the word of God announces and aims at, and what it also really accomplishes, why, one would think that it ought to be received with gladness everywhere. For it announces to fallen sinners such things as ought to fill them with heavenly joy: to wit, that God so loves them, that he has given his only begotten Son for their salvation; also, that he wills not the death of any sinner, but that every one may repent and live; also, that he does not demand of them any work or piety or goodness as a condition for his grace, but now invites them freely and for naught to this his Son Jesus, with the ex-

press promise that every one who comes to him and believes in him has the forgiveness of sins through his name. In order to explain and illustrate such announcements the word also sets forth a multitude of examples which show how very great sinners have been received, restored. cleansed. There one sees a publican who was called, and made a disciple and apostle; there a sinful woman who according to the law of Moses might have been stoned, but who was absolved by the Lord Jesus; there a lost, prodigal son whose return to his father's house occasioned a feast of gladness; there a thief, robber, or malefactor, who already hung on the cross, but then and there turned to the Lord Jesus, and was at once allowed with him to enter paradise; there another kind of a sinner, a Pharisee, who with furious enmity persecuted the church of God, but who was sought out by the Lord, and received grace, and was honored with the office of an apostle. — Behold now, ought not a message of such things, and thus illustrated, be received with gladness the world over? Yes, "ought not," as Luther says, "all the world creep on their bare knees all the way to Jerusalem, if necessary, in order to get the privilege of listening to such a message from heaven?"

278. If we behold, further, what the word of God accomplishes wherever it is accepted, then it is still more strange that it should anywhere be met with enmity. Never has anybody heard that the gospel ever made an honest man dishonest, a sober man a drunkard, a chaste man or woman an adulterer or harlot, etc. No; but anybody can see this: If the word of God gets hold of the heart of a drunkard, then he becomes sober; if it gets hold of the heart of an adulterer or harlot, then he or she becomes chaste; if it gets hold of the heart of a dishonest man, a liar, a swearer, then he becomes honest, truthful, ceases to swear, etc. In short, the word of God is such a word that it transforms and regenerates sinners, makes them like the Lord Jesus, makes them heavenly-minded, etc. As Paul says:

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [or, there is a new creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17). Why, behold, is it not beyond measure wonderful and strange that a word which accomplishes such things should be so hateful to men, that as soon as any one in truth begins to believe, then he at once becomes an object of hatred? Thus it happens as the Lord says to his disciples: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt x. 34).

279. But what, then, occasions this ennity? This question the Lord Jesus answers: "This is the condemnation [judgment], that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds [works] were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds [works] should be reproved." (John iii. 19, 20), This is, therefore, the real ground of their enmity: to wit, that the word of God, like a light, constitutes a condemnatory judgment against their ungodly life and conduct. For it always irritates the natural man that any one disapproves and condemns that which he loves; and this applies not only to such as live in a coarse outward ungodliness, like unchastity, drunkenness, swearing, etc., but also to such as outwardly appear pious and righteous. Yes, never is the enmity of the heart so terribly aroused as when condemnation strikes such things as man himself esteems good and right, and in which, as he thinks, he has some ground for boasting, or satisfaction. Therefore we see also in the history of the Gospels how just those who were esteemed as the best and most pious persons always were the most decided enemies of Christ and his gospel. The same thing also the history of the kingdom of God ever since has shown at all times, and it is certainly not likely to be different hereafter. If the word of God reproved only publicans and harlots and other gross sinners, then it would surely

be allowed to go through the world unmolested; but when it assails the wisdom of the scribes and the piety of the Pharisees, then it cannot be otherwise than that it draws upon itself a dreadful enmity. For the more pious any one is in his own eyes the more passionately does he hate Christ and his gospel.

Such things one must not, therefore, be astonished at when they happen even nowadays. "As he (the Lord Jesus) is" - namely, in the picture which the Gospels give of him —, "so are we in this world," says the apostle. (1 John iv. 17). "He was despised, and rejected [or, forsaken] of men; as one from whom men hide their face he was despised," says the prophet. (Is. Liii. 3, Revised Version). And who are we that it should go otherwise with us? No, it cannot be; for thus says the Lord: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke vi. 26). It is a bad sign when one who confesses the faith does not on account of his faith get some enemies. Over against this the Lord says for the comfort of true disciples: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. v. 11, 12). This the apostles also understood when they were scourged in the presence of the Jewish council; for afterwards they departed with hearts full of joy, "that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the Name" - the name of Jesus. (Acts v. 40, 41, Rev. Ver.). Yes, Paul puts it in his catalogue of merits (in 2 Cor. xi. 23 foll.), that he had been in prison more frequently than other ministers of Christ, that he had received stripes above measure, that five times he had received of the Jews forty stripes save one, that thrice he had been beaten with rods, once stoned, etc. Such things are, therefore, nothing to lament over; the Lord

sees it all, and will reward it, as Paul says: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall he revealed from heaven." (2 Thess. i. 6, 7). For a time it tastes bitter, but along with it comes a great recompense of reward. "If we suffer [endure], we shall also reign with him," says Paul (in 2 Tim. ii. 12). And then all trouble and all suffering will be forgotten. There shall then be no enemies any longer.

281. But when David says, "They hate me with hatred wrongfully,"* then he thereby declares that he had not through his life and conduct given them any occasion for such hatred. Therefore the apostle says: "Let none of you suffer . . . as an evil-doer." (1 Pet. iv. 15). For if it be so, that you through unrighteous deeds draw hatred upon yourself, then it will be in vain for you to hide yourself under the language of the Scriptures about the sufferings of Christians. You can then never say of your haters, "They hate me wrongfully," nor do as also David does elsewhere when he calls God to witness that he was innocent over against the hatred of the ungodly. Of this also Paul says against his enemies and slanderers: "Our rejoicing [gloryinglis this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by [in] the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12). And Asaph says: "I have washed my hands in innocency." (Ps. Lxxiii. 13). Reason

^{*} The Hebrew expression sin'ath chamas may be translated either as the English Versions have it — "with cruel hatred" (or, literally, "with hated of violence") — or as the Swedish, both new and old Versions, like several German, have it: "with hate of injustice," or, "wrongfully," "falsely," etc. The noun chamas has evidently in many places the adverbial meaning, wrongfully, of wrong, of unrighteousness, falsely, of injustice, and the like; see c. g. Gen. xvi. 5; Ex. xxiii. 1; Deut. xix. 16; Job xvi. 17; xxi. 27; Ps. xxxv. 11; etc. — J. G. P.

for such a boasting of a pure, irreproachable life all the children of God ought to strive to have. For, in the first place, such a life is pleasing to God; secondly, it serves to honor God and the gospel; and, further, it gives the heart great boldness over against the ungodly, as we also can well see in the examples of the saints. On the contrary, one must always feel cowardly and shy when one knows that the ungodly are right in their accusations, and one sees that through one's own bad conduct reproach has been brought on the dear name of the Lord Jesus and on his gospel. From such conduct and shame may God keep us, and give us grace to adorn, by a holy and irreproachable life, the precious word of grace, by means of which we have been raised up out of our sins.

282. But how we are rightly to conduct ourselves towards enemies, this the Lord teaches us in clear and plain words and examples. The devil would fain mislead us so that we should become imbittered against them, scorn them, deride them, and rail at them, or make jest of, and laugh at, them. But thus the Lord Jesus never acted, neither did he teach his disciples to do so. True, he did indeed declare the judgment of God against enemies, thus leaving us an example to follow; true, also, even his holy wrath flamed up against them when he saw how they endeavored to hinder sinners from entering into his kingdom. But this holy, divine wrath is as far removed from the disposition which jests at and is bitter towards enemies as heaven is removed from earth. The entire conduct of the Lord Jesus towards his enemies had in view their salvation, and in all that he said or did there is not a single instance of his having put a stumblingblock in the way of his enemies. But a stumblingblock there will certainly be for the enemies of the gospel when they who boast of the gospel deal with them in a cold and scornful and heartless manner, subjecting them to slander, bitterness, and such like things, when they rather ought to compassionate

them, weep over them, pray for them, and try how they might help them out of their misery.

- 283. Therefore the Lord Jesus says to his disciples: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt. v. 44). As though he would say: "When you see any one who is hostile to you, then take care that you be not hostile to him, but that you love him with all your heart. And when his enmity against you breaks out in his beginning to curse you, in his hating you, in doing you harm, or in persecuting you, then let your love towards him break out in your blessing him with all your heart, in doing good to him as though he were your friend, and in praying for him as though nothing but his greatest welfare lay on your heart." Such an example the Lord God himself has given us in his delivering up his only begotten Son for those who were only his enemies. Such an example the Lord Jesus has given by his sitting down on the Mount of Olives to weep over Jerusalem, and also, while on the cross, by his praying for his enemies thus: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34). This same example Stephen followed when he, dying under a shower of stones, prayed for his enemies thus: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts vii. 60). The same example also Paul followed when he was so pained in his heart at the sight of his enemies' going to ruin, that he could have wished himself "accursed from Christ", if thereby he could have helped them. (Rom. ix. 3). Concerning this also Peter admonishes the Christians, telling them "Not to render evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye
- should inherit a blessing." (1 Pet. iii. 9).
 284. "Yes," you say; "but when they are not only enemies to me personally, but also enemies to God, then I must, in the name of God, withstand them, as I see also

the apostles have done." Well; that you withstand them inasmuch and so far as they are the enemies of God, that is all right. But say, are you opposing them as one who has compassion upon them, and at heart suffers pain to see their blindness, so that it is really not in your own name, but in the name of God and in the fear of God that you are withstanding them? Or say, do you see in the Gospels that the Lord Jesus was so disposed and so conducted himself towards sinners as you yourself are and do? Oh! let us be honest. Dear friends, let us not be ashamed to confess our sins. Behold, it is good that we have and know the gospel; let us praise God for it, and see to it that no one take it from us. But if our gospel business, or evangelicalness, makes its appearance in such a way, that it becomes a hinderance to other sinners, then it is time to look about us and into ourselves, and see how much for our hearts we have learned and received of the gospel we praise.

285. God grant that this point might become very important to us. Just think if you yourself were one of those opponents and enemies of the gospel, and there should come to you one who is repellent and full of scorn and jest towards you and over your blindness, but then another one should come who would have compassion upon you and would feel your blindness as his own distress, one who in love would talk to you and pray for you, one who in his heart had "a great heaviness and continual sorrow" on account of his seeing your unhappy condition, - say, which of these two would be the one more like the Lord Jesus? and which of these two would you thank the more after you yourself had once obtained sight of the gospel? Behold, there can be no more than one answer, and not more than one application. How are you — you yourself - acting towards those whom you perceive to be enemies? O God, open our eyes! forgive our sins! create anew our hearts, and give us a disposition like thine own!

286. Now David adds: "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee." (Verse 20). He knows, indeed, that if the Lord does not hold him by the hand, and keep him, then he is irretrievably lost. This is a right feeling of one's own helplessness. For how far soever we may have come in faith, we can vet never keep, or preserve, ourselves. We cannot even see all the snares which the devil puts in our way, and even if we could see them, that would not at all help us if it depended upon our own strength to avoid them or extricate ourselves out of them. Therefore it is said: "Even the vouths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." (Is. xL. 30). Look at Peter. As soon as the Lord left him, or let go of him, ever so little, oh! how he was sifted. Yes, look at yourself, and consider how little it requires at times to cause you to fall into sin! A single little breath of the pleasure of man or of the scorn of man — yea, a single wry look — can often be enough to close our mouths, so that we keep silent about Jesus. Yes, you know it well, and you will say it is so if you only admit it honestly. And think, then, how it would go with you if it depended on yourself to preserve your soul.

287. Therefore, there is for us here no other counsel than this, that we do as David here says he does: "I put my trust in thee," that is, in the Lord. What the Lord undertakes to do, that will be done; what he gives, that we have; and what he does not give, that we cannot in any way take. He knows also our weakness and misery, has also such a mind and such a heart, that he is moved with compassion for the poor, the lowly, the helpless. Therefore, also, "the expectation [or, hope] of the poor [lowly] shall not perish for ever." (Ps. ix. 18). For thus, besides, it is declared: "He [the LORD] preserveth the souls of his saints." (Ps. xcvii. 10). And again: "The

^{*} Se my note at § 104, page 112, as to the italicized "not" in this passage. — J. G. P.

Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil." (2 Thess. iii. 3). Therefore, whatever you need, put your trust in him, as David here says he does. He will clothe and feed you just as well as he clothes the grass and feeds the birds. Put your trust in him. He is your Father and your Lord "that hath mercy on thee," and will be such "to your old age, and carry you even to hoar hairs," and will daily forgive your sins, and will let his mercy be as great toward you as heaven is high above the earth. (See Is. Liv. 10; xLvi. 4; Ps. Ciii. 11). Yes, however it may seem, — in all temptations and in all difficulties, — lean upon him, and creep in under his wings. He has sworn, and he will not repent, that "the expectation [or, hope] of the poor shall not perish for ever," or be cut off, or be put to shame. (Ps. ix. 18 [see above]; Prov. xxiii. 18: Rom. v. 5). Say to him: "Dear heavenly Father, behold. thou hast promised to "have pity on the poor and needy, and to save the souls of the needy" (Ps. Lxxii. 13, Rev. Ver.); thou hast also given thine only begotten Son, in order to wash me clean in his blood from all my sins: behold, also, thou knowest that in me dwells no good thing, that I am poor, miserable, ignorant, and weak, seeing nothing, and able to do nothing. Now, O Lord, my God, all hope is gone if I may not trust thee and sit under the shadow of thy wings. Therefore I am trusting in thee according to thy own promises; 'let me not be ashamed,' let me not be put to shame." That's right; just talk in that way with the Lord your God, and be sure that heaven and earth shall perish, but not you. For thus sounds the chorus of promises: "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, . . . in righteousness shall thou be established: . . . thou shalt not fear" (Is. Liv. 11, 14); "I will guide thee with mine eye" (Ps. xxxii. 8), "in the paths of righteousness for my name's sake" (Ps. xxiii. 3), "with my counsel, and afterward receive thee to glory" (Ps. Lxxiii. 24); "though thou fallest, thou

shalt not be utterly cast down; for I uphold thee with my hand" (Ps. xxxvii. 24), "for the LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Ps. cxlv. 14). It is not possible that those who have the Lord for their God should be put to shame, or be made ashamed. Therefore, also this is said: "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD. Happy is that people, that is in such a case." (Ps. cxliv. 15). Yes, happy is that people.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

May God redeem Israel out of all his troubles.

288. In the two verses which now follow, David first prays, saying: "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." The word which is here translated "integrity" means really [as does also the Latin word of which "integrity" is a slight change] "wholeness," or "entireness." Hence David prays that God would give him a whole and right heart; that is, such a heart as is upright, or thoroughly honest, before the Lord, and which gives, or yields, itself wholly to him. And for this he prays, in order that he may be preserved. For, as we have often before said, a Christian cannot be preserved, or kept, in any other way than by his clinging to the Lord with a simple, childlike, and upright heart. Therefore David says in another place: "My shield is with God, which saveth the upright in heart." (Ps. vii. 10, Rev. Ver.). And again: "Blessed is the man in whose spirit there is no guile." (Ps. xxxii. 2). If a Christian begins to live in guilefulness, duplicity, or falseness, then it is all over with him as such, and he is lost. Of this also experience bears witness. Upon the magician Simon, who at one time had through the gospel become a believer, this judgment was afterwards pronounced by the apostle Peter: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter [or, word]: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God." (Acts viii. 21). Such a case is fearful.

Just think of one having for a time believed in the Lord Jesus, having for a time tasted the good word of God, and having been happy in Jesus, but then afterwards fallen into the snare of the devil! Surely, the thought of a possibility of such a fearful end ought to stir us up to cry to the Lord for "integrity and uprightness," that is, for a whole and a right heart, in order that we may be preserved in the truth and the faith and the eternal life.

289. "But" - thus you will ask - "what is a whole and a right heart, or, integrity and uprightness of heart?" This is a question which often troubles the children of God. For when they know of and feel sin in their hearts, then they fear that their heart is not right before God. But how this matter really stands, that can be seen best in the examples of those who, according to the testimony of the Lord Jesus himself, were his true disciples. Were they indeed without sin? No, far from it! Now in one way, now in another way, they sinned and slipped and transgressed. As late as the last evening before the death of their Lord they quarreled among themselves as to "which of them should be accounted the greatest." (Luke xxii. 24). Yes, a little while thereafter they all forsook him and fled, all of them except Peter, who followed along and denied him. And yet their hearts were whole and right before God. - Look also at David. He has of the Scriptures this testimony that he was a man after God's own heart (see I Sam. xiii. 14; Acts xiii. 22), therefore a man with a whole and right heart before God. But his history is by no means the history of a sinless man. No; there are cases of his falling into sin which are really dreadful. - Of Job it is said in precisely the same words as David here in this psalm uses, that he was "whole and right." [Thus Job i. 1, literally according to the Hebrew*). But

^{*} Notice that the Hebrew word for "right" here in Job i. 1
—"jashar"— is the same as is used concerning God in Ps. xxv. 8,

despite this he could sin even so far as to curse the day of his birth. — Look also at all the children of God now living. Ask them if they are sinless, or free from sinning, and they will, one after another, smite their breasts, and confess that in them, in their flesh, "dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18), that they sin in many ways daily, so that they often, on that account, are uncertain about their really being children of God and in a state of grace. Consequently: it can be no evidence of a deceitful spirit within you, that you feel your heart to be full of sin. On the contrary, "the greater the saint the stronger the feeling of sin," as Luther says.

290. "But" — thus you again ask — "what then is that whole and right spirit?" Answer: Look again at the example of the disciples. Sin and weakness you do indeed see; but amid all weakness, all errors and sins, there was especially one thing which always characterized them: namely this, that above everything else they desired to belong to the Lord Jesus, to follow, obey, and serve him. However faulty and miserable they often were, yet one could always say of them that they desired with all their heart to be his, and in everything to be upright, open, candid, and sincere before him. When, therefore, he asked them if they would go away from him, then they answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi. 67, 68). Yes, when he was taken from them, then for the time being it was indeed all over with their faith; but so closely did their hearts cling to him, that it was really just as though they had lost their life when they had lost Jesus. Therefore we see, also, that when he again manifested himself to them, then they became so exceedingly glad, that nothing else could have filled them with such joy. All their peace and joy

It is the noun ("uprightness") of the same word, that is used here in the passage under consideration (Ps. xxv. 21). — J. G. P.

depended on him, — and verily: if there be anything that gives evidence of a whole and right heart, then it is this.

291. Look, further, also at those who now are the children of God, and ask them how they have it in this matter, how they think and feel about it, and you will hear that they are not afraid of anything so much as of the danger of going away from the Lord. Therefore, also, they daily pray that God may search them, and try them, and use any means whatever, if he will only help them, and keep them in his truth. Now, dear friend, what kind of a spirit do you think it is that has made them thus disposed? Just think: these same persons, - why, some years ago they lived totally indifferent to the matter whether they belonged to the Lord or not; they lived in the world and of the world and according to its ways, loose and careless, without uneasiness, without fear. If any one talked to them about their souls, then they laughed at such talk and such things as folly, etc. And now, - why, now it is so important to them to be upright before God, to belong wholly to him and to be his children, that no thought is so terrible to them as that they might be deceived, or be false, without their being really aware of it. Most certainly one can see that it is a different spirit, a new spirit, which has come into such persons. But that spirit — it is the "whole and right spirit," it is the Spirit of God. For such a spirit, such a mind, or disposition, does not dwell in nature, neither can the devil give it. No; it is from God.

292. In an equally clear manner does "the whole and right spirit," or the spirit of "integrity and uprightness," show itself in the attitude of the children of God towards sin. Before they knew the Lord they never thought that they were particularly sinful, but were quite satisfied with themselves. But as soon as they learned to know the Lord, at once they became so black and detestable in their own eyes, that they make all their piety and peace to consist

only in their trusting in and resting on Jesus, and in their having in his name the forgiveness of their sins. Besides, formerly they did not regard, or care about, sin as of any consequence; no, they loved it, defended it, and found pleasure or profit in it. But now they can in no wise and on no account tolerate it; and if, in one way or another, they fall, it is as though they fell into fire or water. Yes, they may at times for long periods go about so oppressed under their weakness and wretchedness, that they often sigh: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" [Or, "from this body of death?"]. (Rom. vii. 24). Does any one then ask them if they fear hell, they answer: "No, I do not think of hell; but sin, that dreadful sin! — oh, how shall I get rid of sin?" Why, dear friend, that is indeed a wonderful spirit. Surely, you do not find in the world such a spirit, such a mind. But what kind of a spirit is this? Answer: This is the "whole and right" spirit, the spirit of "integrity and uprightness," the spirit in which there is no guile. As Luther says: "It is impossible that it should be otherwise than that one who suffers from sin itself must be a holy person." Such a spirit is surely a partaking of the divine nature (see 2 Pet. i. 4), and an indication of that condition of which Paul speaks when he says that the believer "is joined unto the Lord" and "is one spirit" with him. (1 Cor. vi. 17). This spirit it is, also, that affords the reason why in the Scriptures the Christians are called "spiritual."

293. Such teaching we find also in the examples of the saints mentioned in the Scriptures. Peter could indeed be so overwhelmed by fear of man, that he denied the Lord; but when the Lord looked upon him, and he began to remember the word of the Lord, just see how he then behaved himself. Oh! when he left the room, and went into the outer court to weep, then, surely, any one could have seen by his eyes and his gait that in this man there dwelt a spirit which could not agree with sin. David, too,

sinned so grievously that he together with Peter has become a really first-rate sample of sinners. For when any illustrative examples of really great sinners are to be cited from the Scriptures, then it is always a matter of course that David and Peter must be brought forward. Just so; but when Nathan came and upbraided David for his particular sin, see how he then behaved himself. Oh! what crying: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression: and my sin is ever before me Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities," etc. (Ps. Li. 1, 2, 3, 9). And of what did that cry bear witness? Did it bear witness of such a spirit as could well agree with sin? No; but it did witness of "the whole and right spirit," and such a cry will to the end of days bear witness of such a spirit.

294. It is altogether different with them that are false in spirit, or full of guile, or deceit. With them godliness is only a work which they must do to be righteous before God, or else a work for the sake of gain, as Paul says of hypocrites: they "suppose that godliness is a way of gain. (1 Tim. vi. 5, Revised Version). Such persons are concerned not so much about being Christians as about being regarded as Christians. If any one expresses doubts as to their life, then they do not become afraid so that they might go to the Lord Jesus and cry: "Lord, how is it? Lord, am I false? am I deceiving myself and trying to deceive others? Lord, have mercy upon me, and let me know the truth about myself." No, they do not do or say so; but they become angry and imbittered. For in them there is not the mind, or disposition, that would know the truth about themselves, but only the mind which likes to have others think and say the best things about them; that is to say, there dwells in them that same disposition, still

unbroken and untamed, that rules the entire ungodly world. For the world does not want to know the truth about itself. Therefore, neither is there in them any spirit of fear, or self-distrust, but a stiff and haughty spirit, as a Christian so often finds out, and even feels, when he comes in contact with them, and that even though he does not find anything particular to reprehend in their outward life. For the same reason there is neither any sorrow for sin in them; but what they talk about in that matter, that they talk only as they have heard or read or as they remember they themselves have had experience of it sometime heretofore — in case they ever before have lived in fellowship with the Lord.

295. Behold, therefore, how important this prayer of David is: "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." If also you feel, or are conscious of, how prone your nature is to untruth, hypocrisy, and falseness, then surely you will want to be along where they cry to the Lord for an upright spirit. For this also David prays in Ps. Li., saying: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." Such a spirit is the work and gift of God, for he is the one who works all good, "both to will and to do." (Phil. ii. 13). Of this he says in Ezek. xi. 19: "I will but a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony-heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh," that is, a soft and tender heart, impressionable by the word and the spirit of the Lord. And again in Ezek. xxxvi. 26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." And again, in Jeremiah (chap. xxxi. 33): "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Such a spirit, also, he will give to all who call upon him; as the Lord Jesus says: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke xi. 13). Through this Spirit it is, also, that the faithful are kept, or preserved, unto everlasting life; as Paul says: "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Rom. viii. 10). God grant that we may be more and more filled with this Spirit.

296. But inasmuch as David adds, "for I wait on thee," he thereby repeats the same thought and confession which before in this psalm he has expressed many times in such words as these: "I trust in thee," "on thee do I wait all the day," "mine eyes are ever toward the LORD," etc. [See verses 1, 5, 15, 20]. It is as if he would say: "Dear Lord God, I say it over and over again that I have none other to trust in than thee; there is in heaven or earth no one else than thou who can help me, none else that can be trusted in than thou; therefore I come to thee with all my troubles and all my needs." This is a beautiful example of faith. For faith is nothing else than such a simple confidence in God through Jesus Christ; that it is so, that can be plainly seen in the gospel history. For there one sees that in order to believe, or have faith, there is no need of much knowledge, or learning, or art, or power. A simple and sincere heart which feels, or knows, its need, and knows also that the Lord is the Saviour, and therefore with all its need turns to him — that is all. Thoughts and opinions change; the thoughts of one are more accurate than those of another; but the thoughts of all are faulty in one way or in another way or in many ways; so, also, one is in life and conduct stronger, the other weaker; but no thoughts, no opinions, no degrees of strength make a Christian. No; a Christian is a person whose heart rests on the Lord God and on him whom he has sent, Jesus Christ. In other respects, no matter however ignorant, or astray, or wrong, or mistaken, or weak, he may be; he may be a Lutheran or a Reformed, a Catholic or a Methodist or a Baptist, - a Christian, that is what he is after all and in any case. Though his head may go wrong, his

heart goes right, and that is the main thing. He may also be weak, still he is a child of God. In cases, on the contrary, where the heart does not rest on the Lord, there the person in question is no Christian, even though such a one be stronger and firmer than Paul, and more orthodox than all angels in heaven.

297. To know this is, in the first place, comforting: because from this circumstance we understand how the Lord God has children even there where as to knowledge there may exist great ignorance and error, and as to life great weakness and faultiness; so, also, how we ourselves may be allowed to be his children although we are very ignorant, and now in one way and now in another way get into error and sin. Furthermore, to know this is also wholesome: because it teaches us to love and embrace as brethren even such as appear to us to be weak as to life and conduct or to be in error and astray as to knowledge. Otherwise it will easily happen that we become offended at such, and then we are ready to condemn and discard them, as is often seen in experience, also. For this there is indeed no other remedy than that we not only by the words learn, but also in the heart consider, how among all people and races and tongues every one who at heart trusts in the Lord Jesus as the Saviour sent of God is a child and heir of God, a brother of all the apostles and prophets and saints, and a bride of Jesus Christ the Son of God. That such a one is weak and faulty in knowledge and in life - well, God has never had any but weak and faulty children. Ever from the beginning he has been accustomed to this, and that he is not yet weary of this circumstance; that shall in all eternity afford him honor and praise. And we who still trudge about here below, and who ourselves desire, though weak and faulty, to be allowed to be children of God, we ought indeed to rejoice and not to be sorry, or angry, that such is the fact and such is the state of things according to the good grace of God.

298. "Yes," you say; "but there must, however, be a limit to one's weakness, or faultiness; it will surely not do for a Christian to be weak in what manner or to what degree soever." — Well, the Scriptures say nothing, in this respect, about definite limits or degrees. Neither in the experience of those who believe in Jesus will you hear much said on these points. Certainly, differences are readily seen: as that one is stronger, another weaker; also, that the same Christian is at one time weaker, at another time stronger; also, that the one is stronger or weaker in one respect, the other in another. Such conditions may depend on many different causes. But, as we have said above, it is not upon measures, limits, or degrees, of strength or weakness that life depends. Where there is a false. deceitful spirit, there is death, even if the person in question were in life and testimony so supremely excellent as to put to shame all true children of God. Wherever, on the contrary, there is such a spirit as cannot live without Jesus, neither can have any peace in anything but in his blood, there is a Christian, a child of God, even though you might see such a one ever so fearfully sifted by Satan. That the example of Peter shows. Such views, also, the Lord surely desires to teach us when he so often in the Scriptures calls himself the God of the lowly, the afflicted, the wretched, the poor, the needy, the helpless, of such as "cannot keep their souls alive," etc. That now it is so, that we cannot change. The Pharisees could and did, indeed, murmur at the fact, but could never change that fact, that the Lord Jesus received really great sinners. And you, just wait a little. If you do not need to do so now, the moment will come when you will be compelled to give up all thought of life and happiness, unless the Lord will be the God of those who are really woebegone, and miserable, and weak. In that moment you will thank God to hear that there is no question of limits or measures or degrees of weakness and misery, but that

even the weakest and most wretched may cling to the cross, and that, even in the times of the most fearful sifting, when it looks as though you were fairly "sold under sin," you may nevertheless believe in Jesus, and freely, without price and without merit, be clean in his blood.

299. Finally David adds: "Redeem Israel. O God. out of all his troubles." (Verse 22). In this prayer he sums up all the need of all the people of God, and casts it upon the Lord. It is impossible to enumerate, or to give a detailed account of, all the troubles, needs, and miseries which oppress the people of God and which cause them, although they are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, often to go about in this their state of exile and alienage with oppressed hearts and tearful eyes. Well, it is enough to say: there is need, — there is distress, — distress in the city of God. All those who belong to that city must in a greater or less measure have their share of this distress. Abel began the line, and after him has followed a multitude which no one can number. In Hebrews xith the apostle speaks of the example and experience of the saints in this matter, and says, after having mentioned some by name: "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented," etc. Therefore it is said also of the multitude that the seer saw standing before the throne of the Lamb: "These are they which come out of the great tribulation." (Rev. vii. 14, Revised Version). David, too, was in that line of sufferers, so that at times he had to wail exceedingly loud: "The waters," so he says in one place (Ps. Lxix. 1, 2), "are come in unto my soul. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." And in another place (Ps. xLii. 7): "Deep calleth

unto deep all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me."

300. Heavier than all other distress is the distress about sin. Paul was beaten with rods, stoned, scourged, etc. And all that he could endure with joy. But when he felt the law of sin in his members, then he cried out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" [Or, "out of this body of death?"]. (Rom. vii, 24, Rev. Ver.). In the same kind of distress Isaiah moans: "O LORD, why dost thou make us to err [that is, why dost thou let us err] from thy ways, and hardenest our heart from thy fear?" (Is. Lxiii. 17, Revised Ver.). In the same kind of distress also another of the saints of God has moaned: "I am as a man that hath no help: Cast off [or, away] among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more; and they are cut off from thy hand." (Ps. Lxxxviii. 4, 5, Rev. Ver.). Were the children of God free from sin, then they would regard everything else as easy to bear.

301. Lo! all this distress, whatever it be, all that can be named or thought of, be it spiritual or bodily, caused by oneself or by others, deserved or undeserved, all this David here, both in behalf of himself and in behalf of all the people of God, casts upon the Lord his God, the true Helper in all need and distress. For if he were to bear it himself, then he would be crushed beneath it. In this he leaves also us an example both of faith and love. It is an example of love that he feels concern for the people of God. Such a concern God even desires to find in all his children, as the apostle exhorts, "Pray one for another." (Jam. v. 16). Where any one is born of God, there such a one cannot be indifferent about his kingdom on earth. "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." (1 John v. 1). He who does not love his brother, he cannot be loving the Lord, and thus he shows that he is not born of God. But where

there is love, it must also make itself manifest in concern and interest for those who are loved. "Whether one member suffers," says the apostle, "all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii. 26). Therefore also the Lord Jesus says to his disciples: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 35). Dear friend, are you a member of the body whose head is Christ, then let the troubles and distress of the church of God go to your heart so that you, whereever you can, will serve and help and heal and strengthen the other members by word and deed, and thus show yourself by fervent love and intercession to be one who lives not for himself, but for the Lord and his church.

302. But not only this. By these words of David we may learn also this: to wit, out of real love to be concerned and to care and to pray for the people of the old covenant. For it is this people David here primarily means. True, this people have rejected and crucified the Prince of life; true, they are now, as a punishment for their iniquity, scattered all over the earth; nevertheless, they are the children of Abraham, the people of the old covenant, upon whom still rest great and unchangeable promises. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29)—he cannot repent of them. This people shall again be gathered together, and through them it is that the kingdom of Christ shall gain its most glorious victories among the Gentiles, the nations. (See Rom. xi. 12, 15). That they are now blind as regards their salvation, and scattered as regards their political state, these are their present "troubles," or distresses. These "troubles" and distresses we ought therefore to take to heart, so that we daily cry to the Lord about them, as David here does, and give and do what we can to spread the light of the gospel among them. The Lord Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives and wept when he foresaw what now lies

open to the eyes of all of us; and we, who believe in him, should we be indifferent to this people? No; God help us to "awake up righteously" to this matter. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, invokes our sympathy and interest in the distress and "troubles" of the children of Abraham. And ought not his voice and cry to go to our hearts? Dear friend, do you fully consider that it is from the Jews that the salvation has come to us? (See John iv. 22; Rom. ix. 5). And should not you then be concerned about bringing it back to them for their use also? From the word you hear that the Lord is all the day spreading out his hands unto that people (see Is. Lxv. 2), and ought not you, too, together with him, spread out your hands unto them? O let us begin to pray and work for Israel!

303. An example of faith we have, further, in this prayer of David, because, as has been already said, he teaches us what we are to do with and where we are to take both our own troubles and the troubles of the church. Were we to bear these troubles ourselves, then we would soon be crushed. This also experience teaches; for as soon as we take hold of this burden with our own hands we become discouraged, disconcerted, and disabled. But now we do not need to go and carry it ourselves, but may lay it off from us and upon another. For right among us dwells the One who is stronger than we are, and he will carry us and all our burdens, too. As it is said: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden, even the God who is our salvation." (Ps. Lxviii. 19, Rev. Ver.). And again: (in Ps. xLvi. 1-5, 7): "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." And hear still more in this psalm: "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Upon him we may cast everything; he will take charge of it. Such privilege ought indeed to be enough. When we know this, surely we may in the midst of our troubles say: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquited within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health [or, help] of my countenance, and my God." (Ps. xlii. 11). And the Lord Jesus says to his disciples: "Lo, I am with you alway [or, all the days], even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20). Oh! is this true? Yes, it is true: God dwells in the midst of us, — yes, God is with us, and with us is also the Lamb who was slain and through whose blood we have redemption, an eternal redemption.

304. Therefore let us have patience. To this prayer, "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles," we have also the surest promise as an answer: "The LORD shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Ps. cxxx. 8), and hence also out of all troubles, for these all come from iniquity and the arch-worker of iniquity. Of this also Paul says to the Christians in Rome: "The Lord of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. xvi. 20). There is no doubt about that matter; no, on the contrary it is the most certain thing in the world, that God shall redeem and deliver his people out of all their troubles and needs and distresses. It will take a few days more for some than for others; but it will come, - the deliverance, the redemption will most surely come to them all. The people of God form, so to speak, a great, long procession moving onward and upward on its way to heaven. Some have long ago reached the goal, and are now standing around the throne praising the Lamb who was slain and the Father who gave us that Lamb. Others are just at the door, and are one after another almost every moment stepping over the threshold. Then in the rear of the procession the rest of us are coming up, some glad, some sad, some singing, some sighing, — oh, it is a wonderful

procession! — and in the midst of the multitude goes he, the Lord Jesus, our Saviour, comforting and encouraging some, supporting and even carrying others, — oh, it is a wonderful procession! — and to heaven it is going — to heaven — to heaven — to the eternal rest in the Father's house, where there shall be no more sin, and no more weeping, but eternal righteousness, eternal joy, eternal praise before and round about the throne of the Lamb. Hallelujah.

Oh! may God redeem Israel out of all troubles.

AMEN.





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